

Surreal Grotesque

Issue 4: Sex & Death

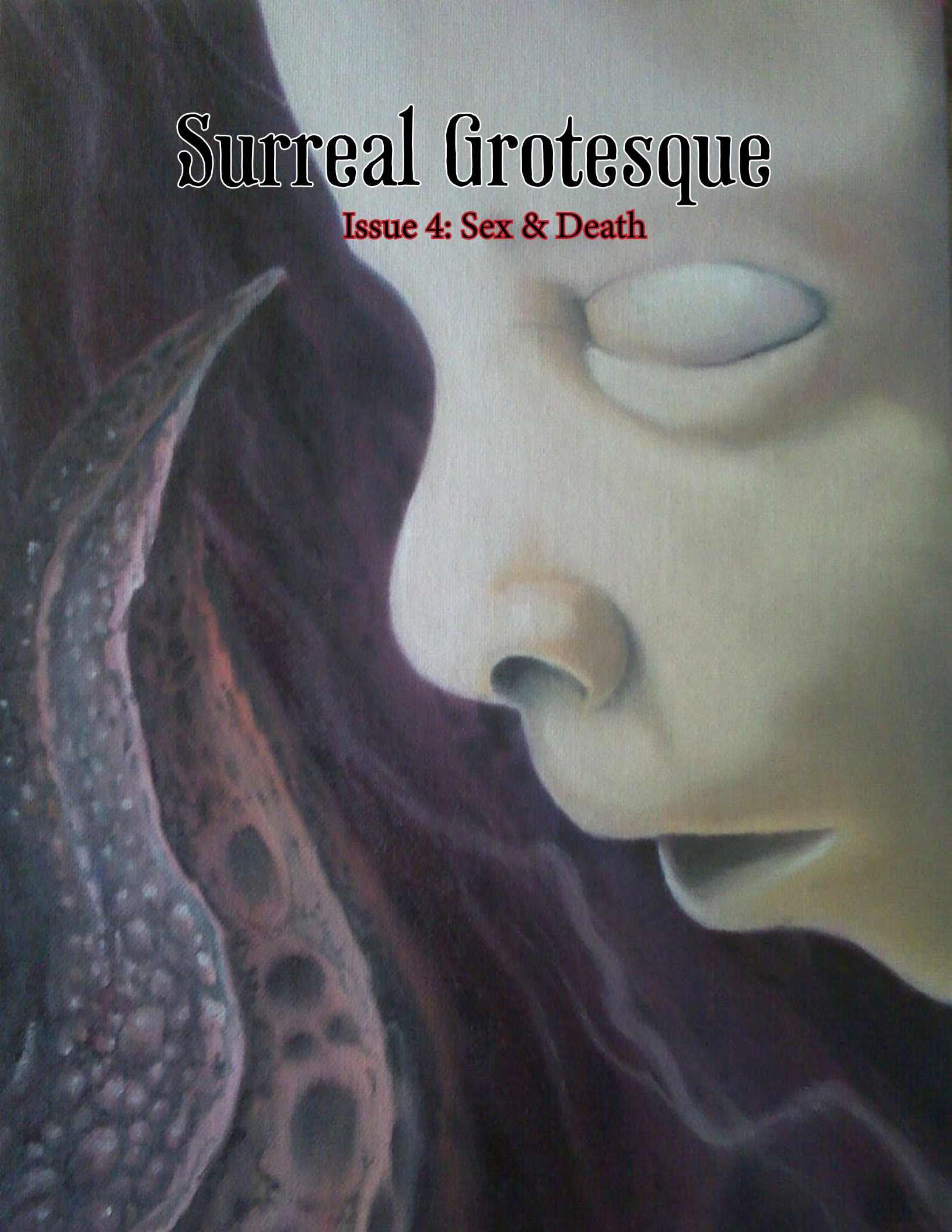


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DARCY

Eric Wojciechowski

Isabel says, “Dad, remember when I was sixteen-months-old and we buried people in the ground?”

Her little face looks up at me. The top of her left iris is still brown while the rest is green. From the corner of her mouth, she blows curls of hair away from her face, her three-year-old stare waiting for something else to chew on.

I stand at the stove and stir her eggs. “Do you want cheese on these?”

She shrugs. “Sure.”

Isabel was almost three years of trial and error before becoming a zygote. The first inkling of her presence was when my wife found herself bent over a toilet. Hands holding each side of the commode, in between bursts of microwaved French toast crisps, Darcy said, “One of your wiggly fuckers made it.”

After two years of marriage, it was time to make a family. I would come home from work and Darcy would meet me at the door. “I’m ovulating.” She’d lead me into the bedroom and start pulling off her clothes like there was a prize for the first one to get naked. Darcy would jump on the bed and let her tits bounce about until they lost momentum. She’d roll over with her legs in the air and say, “Come on. It’s time.”

Months and months of fucking. A dream come true. No condoms. We’d rest every other day to let my balls build up with another heavy dose of polliwog stew. We took longer breaks every month, when her period would come and Darcy would try to eat her way out of depression.

“That’s the seventh month,” she said, a box of fudge covered, chocolate finger cakes in her lap. “We need to see someone.”

“I don’t think we’ve given it enough time. Let’s keep trying.”

“You know what I saw today?” she said. “Some girl, couldn’t have been more than nineteen, towing two kids behind her.”

“Just lucky,” I said.

“Trash, dope-smoking, half-witted whore can pop out kid after kid on an annual basis. We want one for the right reason. Not for extra money from the State. It’s unfair.”

I knew when Darcy was ready to begin a new month of bedroom antics. In the morning, I’d get up to find her in the middle of the living room. She’d be following a yoga video on the television. A leg held high in the air, one arm extended overhead, she’d say, “Good morning.” She’d smile with her face between her knees. I’d be pouring my coffee and pulling my lunch out of the fridge and she’d say, “Be ready.”

All day, Darcy would prep and tease me. At a 9AM meeting, the leather case on my hip that held my phone would buzz. I'd flip my phone open under the table. Between the boss turning on his new laser pointer and beaming the charts, my wife's open vag would be in 1280 X 960 resolution.

I'd be out to lunch with a client. The waiter would come by and take our order. While my client made his choice of cut, my phone buzzed against my hip. And while my client finished his selection with a bowl of broccoli-cheddar soup, my wife would be in profile with a cucumber halfway down her throat. The message under the picture would read, "Be ready."

Almost a full year of trying and Darcy gaining twenty pounds of chocolate and fudge around her waist and neck, now she demanded we get some counseling.

The first thing Dr. Fonner required was that I get tested. The physician assigned this task examined my penis, balls, and then made a dark turn and peeked at my asshole.

"What does that have to do with it?" I said.

"Just need to get an overall examination of your area," he said.

The examination continued. Questions were asked and boxes were checked on the exam form.

Smoking? Check: the occasional pipe/cigar

Drinking? Of course.

Medications? None.

"Do you participate in any physical activity that causes trauma to your under carriage, like a sport?" Only when Darcy is ovulating.

Darcy made me give up all my favorite habits.

When the explanation of benefits arrived and I found that the rectal exam wasn't covered because my insurance company considered it discretionary, I had questions.

Dr. Fonner examined the initial test results and found nothing wrong on the outside of any of my *area*. It was time to take a look under a microscope. He referred me to a clinic to make a sperm donation.

The receptionist handed me the paperwork. "Please follow the directions exactly."

"Do I have to give it here?"

"No, you can do it at home." The receptionist handed me a cup and cap. "Deposit the specimen in here. Cap it up. Put your name on the label and fasten it to the cup."

My phone buzzed at my hip. Nasty, dirty Darcy.

I asked the receptionist if I could do it tonight and run it in first thing in the morning.

“No,” she said, “we need it within half an hour of deposit.”

“Anything else?”

“Keep it warm. Body temperature warm.”

The next morning, Darcy had her fist wrapped tight around my shaft while her tongue licked my ball sack. “My arm is getting tired,” she said through wet scrotum.

I was trying. I was thinking of the real dirty porn that could always make me blow my wad in under two minutes. Girls in gangbangs with ten dudes busting their nuts on pretty faces and large racks. Two girls working the juice out of some clown, then snowballing the mess. Bukkake baths and cum gurgling martinis.

Under the pressure, my usual cum-quick coffer failed me. In every dangling, wagging sperm sucking mouth I saw *azoospermia*—that’s no sperm, just semen. In every vision of fingers tracing out a cum blast over huge tits I saw *asthenzoospermia*—a reduction in sperm motility. Over analysis and the stress of Darcy losing her patience caused deflation.

Darcy noticed the flabby meat in her hand. Her right arm started to work more like a pumpjack, working for oil. Losing strength, it was slowing. A nodding donkey coming to its end as it started to lose the desire to bring out more. She looked at me with my balls bouncing against her lips. I raised my eyebrows as if to say, *sorry*. Not to be defeated, she opened her mouth and took the whole package in. Such a pro. Never grazed a tooth. One moment her lips were gliding down my shaft, the next they were kissing my sack.

Seeing my wife with such courage brought my cock back up. Ready for duty, my dick thrust into the air and Darcy beat the hell out of it like it stole something from her.

Double penetration, girls dogging in the park after dark, working a glory hole in an off road rest stop. I thought of every nasty deed. Every dirty tramp that I’d had myself. My mind flashed the best of the worst but words ending in *spermia* kept killing the moment.

Then, an index finger slid into my asshole, pushing deep enough and finding my prostate.

“Don’t forget the cup,” I said.

I took over, finished pumping out my gel while Darcy held the container in her left hand. She capped the bottle and we got dressed. She put the container in between her tits to keep it body temperature warm and off we went to the clinic.

“How long do we have?” she said, jumping into the driver’s seat of our car.

“Thirty minutes,” I said, sliding into the passenger seat.

Darcy hit the gas and blew through a red light. Ten miles from the clinic and Darcy got the attention of the county sheriff.

“This is fucking horse shit!” She pulled over to the side of the road and slammed her fists against the wheel.

“License and registration,” the Deputy said.

“I have cum in my tits,” Darcy said, pointing at her cleavage. “Cum. So we really gotta go!”

The Deputy lifted his glasses and peered down her cleavage, down at the capped vial that held the answers to whether or not I was the problem. He bent down in the window to get a look at me. I grinned.

The clinic called a day later with the results. There was nothing wrong with my specimen. Nothing wrong with me. I didn’t suffer from any form of *spermia*.

Now it was her turn. Darcy consulted with the good Dr. Fonner on her end. Tested for polycystic ovarian syndrome, tubal dysfunctions, pelvic diseases, STDs and every other possible abnormality. But each new day brought news from Dr. Fonner that nothing was wrong with her.

Fifteen months of fucking every other day with breaks only for periods and still nothing. Fifteen periods. $15 \times 6 = 90$. Ninety days I couldn’t fuck her since we started trying. Three months out of almost a year and a half. Darcy had added an extra eighteen pounds.

“What the fuck?!” she said with a mouthful of Doritos.

“Maybe we should take some time off?” I said.

“Maybe you should shut the fuck up!”

“We need to take our time,” I said. “Let Aunt Flow leave town without any fanfare.”

Darcy said, “I just checked my pants and it looks like someone shot three kids in my underwear.”

I digest the analogy and proceed. “Seriously, I think the problem is stress.”

Seventeen months into it and all the good, bare, raw, non-hindered, unencumbered fucking was getting tiring. My engine was giving out. My hips weren’t pumping and thrusting like they used to.

One night Darcy said I was fucking like an old turd. She told me she was going to invest in spurs and start kicking me in the ass when I wasn’t up to speed. After a week of slow rowing and threats of a Wild West-style fight, Darcy said we needed more counseling.

Dr. Fonner advised us to take some time off. It was probably the stress. He had seen it before. Time away from the act of copulation could restrengthen the urge. With reluctance, and me being smart enough *not* to say “I told you so,” Darcy agreed.

We went home and Darcy marked the calendar. In the box of June 30th, it now read, Be Ready.

When I was sixteen-years-old and blowing my wad at anything that resembled a woman’s curvature, I would have never believed it if someone told me one day I’d be relieved *not* to be fucking. When Darcy started to let me spend my evenings catching up on movies instead of riding her ass, it was wonderful. I didn’t even consider masturbation. For the first time since about eight-years-old, I didn’t touch myself. I caught up on some good shows while my soldier rested in the VA.

Over an afternoon pow-wow session with the boss and several other executives, my phone vibrated on my hip. I hadn’t felt that in so long, I jumped. My boss said, “What was that all about?”

I asked him what day it was. We both looked at the calendar and, in unison, we said, “June Thirtieth.”

I flipped open my phone and in thirty-two million colors, a lollipop stuck out of my wife’s plaid-skirted rear end.

Dale from accounting peered over my shoulder. “What you got?”

He looked at my phone’s display just as the second picture came through.

He said, “Hell of a wife you got there.” Both of us stared at Darcy’s face, hair up in pigtails and a winking eye, with a lollipop in her mouth.

Dale said, “Ya think that’s the same sucker?”

Four more periods and twelve more pounds on Darcy’s ass and neck and she kept sending pictures to get me in the mood. During shark weeks, she’d become more angry. “We did everything right. We waited until we had enough money. Waited until we had decent housing. Waited until you had a stable job. This is horse shit.”

We would go through the shopping mall and Darcy would grumble at every woman under the age of twenty-five with more than one child. She’d snap about the young girl with a rounded belly. She’d get manic if one were seen with tattoos up and down her legs and laying down food stamps to buy cigarettes.

“Maybe we should adopt?” she said.

Despite my dwindling desire to continue copulating with Darcy, I just couldn’t do that. Raising another man’s child, let alone another woman’s, was something I wouldn’t do. It would be like permanent babysitting.

Six more weeks went by and one more period. My phone displayed Darcy’s tits covered in oil with *WHORE* marked out in lipstick across her stomach. I got home, opened the door and was hit with a strong scent of marijuana. Darcy was sitting on the couch in a G-string, her legs in the air for me to see her feet in stilettos. Her eyes glazed over. “Hey baby, come ride me.”

“What are you doing?”

“We’re gonna get preggers.”

Beside her was an empty pint of Rich & Rare whiskey. “I wanna tattoo.” She stumbled in her heels after getting up from the couch. She reached her arm around and pointed to her lower back. “Here, right here.”

“You’re not getting a tramp stamp,” I said.

“If it doesn’t work out, you can always use it as another place to dump your useless load.”

More time passed and Darcy entered stage one of alcoholism until one morning she’s bent over the toilet doing a Joker laugh and saying that it’s finally happened.

“Darling, you’re just hung over.”

Months later, I’m putting a pillow over her face because I can’t stand to look at her while I fuck her anymore. Her calves flap in the air, her legs hang between my ears. Sixty pounds heavier, alcoholic wrinkles forming

around the flank of her mouth, she told me she applied for welfare. “We’ll get preggers for sure now.”

At the Department of Social Services, Darcy filled out all the paperwork necessary to conceive a child. She claimed she was unable to secure employment or care adequately for herself due to a diagnosis of depression and anxiety. Dr. Fonner assisted her with verification.

Cash assistance? Check.

Medical? Of course.

Food? Indeed.

“The more boxes I can check off, the more helpless I am, the more likely we’ll get our baby,” she said.

The State never even bothered to fact-check her application. Never knew about me. The bureaucracy of a government program worked in her favor. The social worker, fresh out of college, was still young enough to believe everyone tells the truth.

While Darcy built her profile as a single and disabled woman, I caught up on the television shows I had been missing. Read through the stack of magazines that collected at my bedside.

Halfway through a twelve-pack of Milwaukee’s Best, Darcy said, “What’s your favorite boy’s name?”

“I kind of always pictured having a girl.”

As she cracked the thirteenth beer cap, she said, “I’m not picky either.”

Three more months had passed. I was entertaining clients after hours at a dinner. My phone buzzed at my hip. I flipped it open and Dale said, “Can I see?”

My display showed a crappily inked dove winding a pink ribbon from its beak made out of letters that spelled T-R-A-S-H.

Dale leaned in. “Looks like it’s on her ankle.”

Back at home, I opened the door to another cloud of Mary Jane. But this time, the smell was accompanied by a hint of something sweet mixed with burning plastic.

My nose poked at the air. “What is that?”

Darcy’s eyes were little slits. “Ran into this twenty-year-old drop out down at the Department. Four kids and frail as all hell. I asked what her secret was.”

I run my fingers over my gums. “Did she have a little black around her teeth?”

“How’d ya know?”

Besides alcohol and marijuana, Darcy started using meth. Not only was this going to make her more likely to conceive, it would help with her weight gain. Win-win.

I said, “I need to smack some sense into you.”

“Ooh, if I could see my social worker with a black eye, I could check another box for services.”

Bent over in doggie-style, I was giving Darcy a good pounding. Inked on her lower back was a fresh tattoo of a butterfly mixed with some horrible tribal art complexity.

While I made her queef, Darcy was saying, “I met this girl named Annie down at Social Services today.”

“Oh good, what other pregnancy advice did you get?”

“I asked her how long it took her and her husband to conceive and she said she wasn’t married. Claimed the father was some one-nighter. She doesn’t even know his name.”

I slowed my roll, listened for the conclusion.

Darcy said, “I want a divorce.”

But it never came to that. Two more months and Darcy was holding on to the sides of the toilet and tossing up her French toast crisp breakfast. This time, she wasn’t just hung over. A cross with praying hands was inked up her left arm. Her right shoulder sported the words *Don’t Try, Don’t Plan, Succeed*.

She turned her flushed, pock-marked face to me. She picked at one of the meth scabs on her chin and then wiped spittle from her lips. “One of your little wiggly fuckers made it.”

Isabel was immaculately conceptualized on August fourth that year. The State had paid for everything along the way. Darcy used the food card to buy booze. She traded half of its value for meth and weed.

“Don’t you think you can stop now?” I said.

“Nope. If I go all responsible now, I’ll miscarry.”

On May twelfth the following year, Isabel was pulled out of the shell of a body that housed my wife’s soul.

“We did it,” Darcy said, grasping my hands while she lay on the delivery table.

“I guess we did.”

I held Isabel and rocked her in my arms. Wrapped in a white blanket with pink and blue trimming around the edges. Her eyes rolled open but would roll shut again. The muscles adjusting the eye to the brightness outside the womb, they would be open long enough for me to note she had green eyes. Like her mother. In between the slow blinks I caught the partial brown coloring of her left eye.

Before Isabel reached her eighteen month milestone, Darcy was laid to rest.

On her death bed, I asked if it was worth it. Turning her head to see Isabel at play in the background, she said it was.

Two years later, I’m stirring Isabel’s eggs on the stove and she asks me about the burial of Darcy. Her mother. My wife.

“Yes Isabel. I do remember.” I slide her eggs out of the pan and on to her plate. “Blow on them first. They’re hot.”

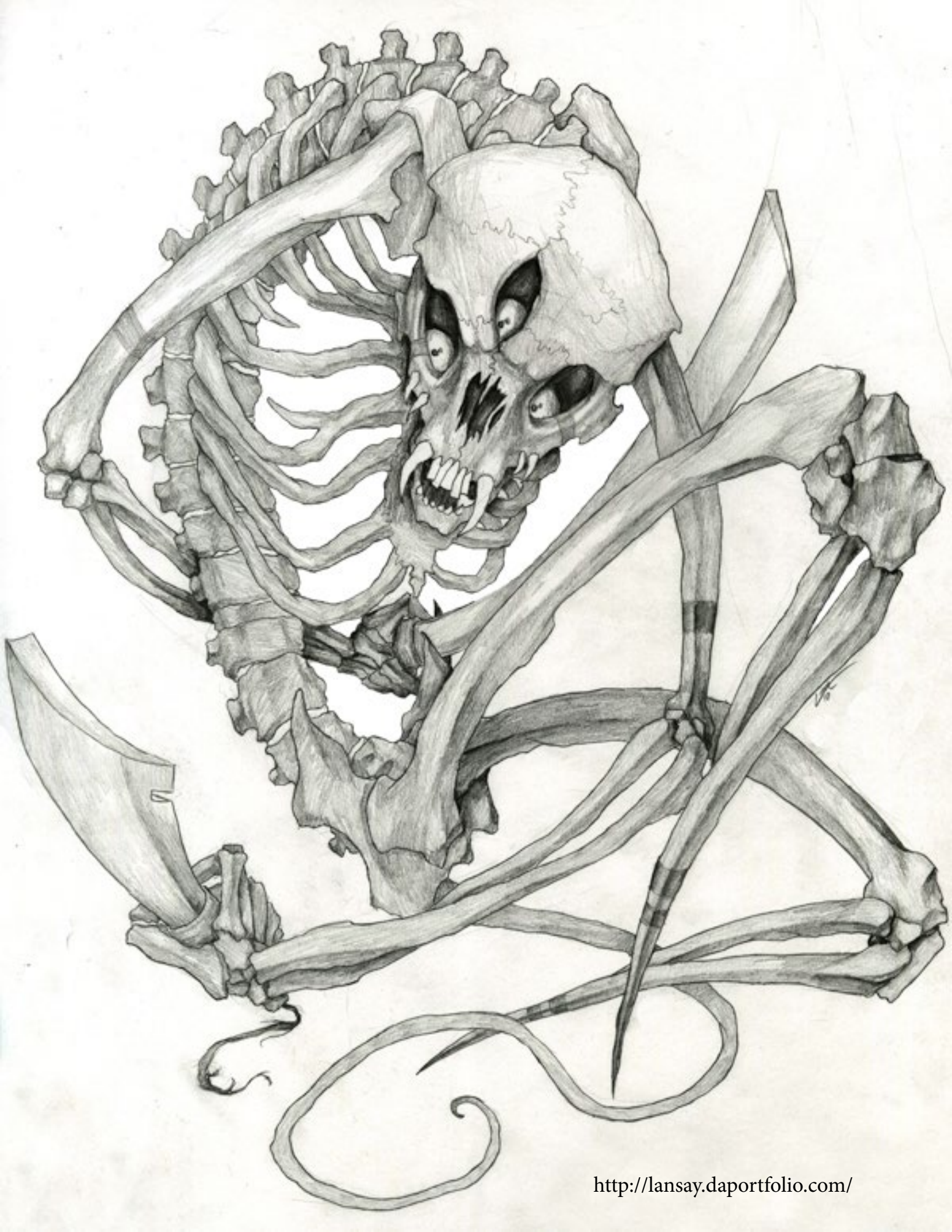
Isabel grabs her fork. “Can we go see her?”

“Sure, we should have time,” I say. “After breakfast. So long as you can get out of those pajamas.”

“Okay Dad, I’ll be ready.”















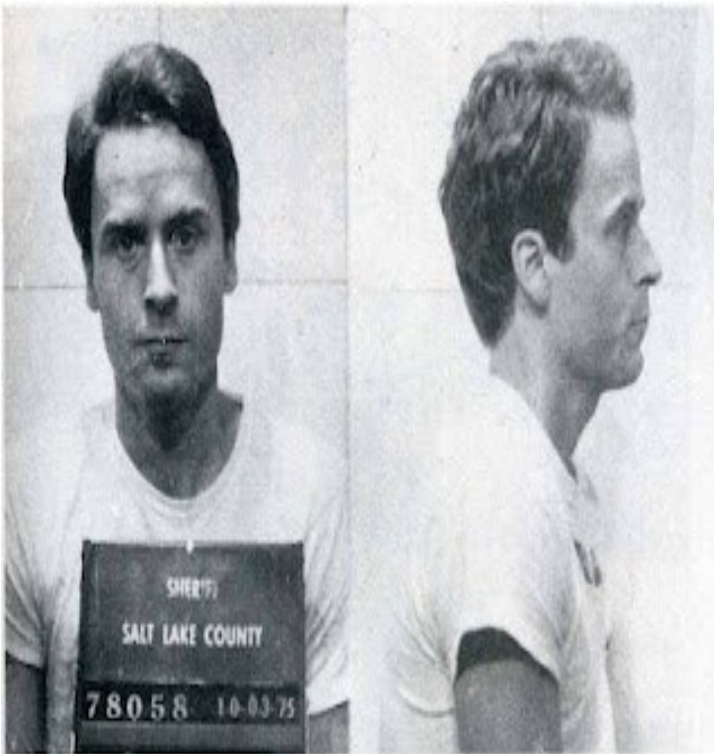








Serial Killer of the Month Club Jenny Krueger



Ted Bundy was born Theodore Robert Cowell to Louise Cowell on November 24, 1946, at the Elizabeth Lund Home for Unwed Mothers in Burlington, Vermont. Elizabeth moved back in with her parents in Philadelphia to raise her new son. For the first few years of his life, Ted thought his grandparents were his parents and his mother was his sister. In 1951 Louise and Ted moved to Tacoma, Washington and Louise married Johnnie Bundy, a military cook.

Ted was well behaved and grew into a handsome young man that was liked by many in his school. After high school, Ted enrolled into the University of Puget Sound and continued to do well academically. Unfortunately, Ted began to feel uncomfortable around his peers who seem to be a lot richer than he was. Later in his sophomore year Bundy transferred to the University of

Washington to escape the uncomfortable feeling of his financial inadequacy. Although Bundy had friends, he never seemed to fit in comfortably while participating in social activities. This was a result of Bundy's acute shyness that made him appear socially awkward.

Bundy hardly ever dated but lucky for him, in 1967 Bundy met the woman of his dreams. She was smart, pretty, wealthy and sophisticated. Pretty much everything a guy looks for in a girl Bundy got in this woman. Atta boy! To top off this wonderful relationship made in "Heaven." They both shared a skill and passion for skiing and spent many weekends on the ski slopes. Bundy fell hard for his first love and tried desperately to impress her by over exaggerating his accomplishments. He won a Summer Scholarship to Stamford but his time there wasn't impressive enough to swoon her. She decided that Bundy lacked certain important qualities and he wasn't husband material so she ended the relationship and broke Ted's heart. His obsession towards her went on to haunt him for years.

Because of the break up, Ted suffered from extreme depression and dropped out of school. During this awful time he learned that his sister was really his mother and his parents were his grandparents. Bundy got the

reputation that he was a petty thief. Because of that he decided to return to college, excelled in his major, and earned a bachelor's degree in psychology. A little while later, Bundy became involved with another woman by the name of Elizabeth Kendall (the pseudonym she used when she wrote "The Phantom Prince: My Life With Ted Bundy") who was divorced with a young daughter. Elizabeth fell head over heels in love with Bundy. Even though she had suspicions that he was seeing other women, she continued to stay by his side and her devotion to Bundy grew stronger. Ted wasn't interested in marriage but he allowed the relationship to continue even after reuniting with his first love who was attracted to the new confidence that is Ted Bundy.

Bundy worked on the re-election campaign of Washington's Republican Governor Dan Evans. Evans was elected and he appointed Bundy to the Seattle Crime Prevention Advisory Committee. Bundy's political future seemed secure, when in 1973 he became assistant to Ross Davis, chairman of the Washington State Republican Party. It was a good time in Bundy's life. He had a girlfriend, his old girlfriend was once again in love with him, and his footing in the political arena was strong. Ahhh yes. Things were looking up. If only Bundy could of kept this going. young women began vanishing from college campuses around Washington and Oregon in 1974. Later that year two women were approached by an attractive man at a Seattle state park. He introduced himself as Ted and asked if they could help him with his sailboat but they refused. Later that day two other women were seen walking away with him then they were never seen alive again.

In the fall of 1974 Bundy enrolled in law school at the University of Utah and he moved to Salt Lake City. Oh shit. Carol DaRonch was attacked in November at a Utah mall by a man who was dressed as a police officer. Lucky for her she managed to escape. She provided police with a description of the man, the VW he was driving, and a sample of his blood that got on her jacket during their fight. Within a few hours after DaRonch was attacked, 17-year-old Debbie Kent disappeared.

Around the same time, a few hikers found a graveyard of bones that happened to be the missing women from Washington and Utah. Both state troopers got together and made up a sketch identifying the man known as Ted. The man who would approach women asking for help, usually appearing helpless by wearing a cast using crutches. That's how he got them. He knew women were programmed with the maternal instinct and couldn't pass up on helping a person in need without feeling extremely guilty about it. Sometimes guilty enough they go back and help them anyway, despite the funny feeling they have in their stomach.

Each state that had missing women compared similarities of the women disappearing. They were both white, skinny and had long hair that was parted in the middle. The dead women found in Utah appeared to be hit over the head with a blunt object, raped and sodomized. I guess he likes back door play. The women were also kidnapped during the evening hours. The police knew they were dealing with a sick and twisted serial killer that had a way to travel from state to state. On January 12, 1975, Caryn Campbell vanished from a ski resort in Colorado while on vacation with her fiance and his two children. A month later Caryn's nude body was found lying a short distance from the road. An examination of her remains determined she had received violent blows to her skull. Over the next few months five more women were found dead in Colorado with similar contusions to their head, possibly a result of being hit with a crowbar.

In August 1975 police attempted to stop Bundy for a driving violation. He aroused suspicion when he tried to get away by turning his car lights off and speeding through stop signs. When he was finally stopped his VW was searched and police found handcuffs, an ice pick, crowbar, pantyhose with eye holes cut out along with other questionable items. You never know if those things were part of his role play in love making. People have strange obsessions, it's possible. They also saw that the front seat on the passenger side of his car was missing. Police arrested Ted Bundy on suspicion of burglary.

The police compared things found in Bundy's car that DaRonch described to them. After she picked Bundy out of a line-up they felt they had enough evidence to charge him with attempted kidnapping and they felt confident that they caught the guy responsible for the tri-state murder spree that went on for more than a year. In February



1976, Bundy went on trial for the attempted kidnapping of DaRonch. After waiving his right to a jury trial he was found guilty and sentenced to 15 years in prison. I guess all that practice with back door play will finally come in handy. ;) While Bundy was in Prison police were investigating links to Bundy and the Colorado murders. According to his credit card statements he was in the area where several women vanished in early 1975. In October 1976 Bundy was charged for the murder of Caryn Campbell.

Bundy was extradited from the Utah prison to Colorado for the trial. Serving as his own lawyer allowed him to appear in court without leg irons plus gave him an opportunity to move freely from the courtroom to the law library inside the courthouse. In an interview, while in the role as his own attorney, Bundy said, "More than ever, I am convinced of my own innocence." In June 1977 during a pre-trial hearing he escaped by jumping out of the law library window. He was captured a week later. On December 30th Bundy escaped from Prison and made his way to Tallahassee, Florida where he rented an apartment near Florida State University under the name Chris Hagen. He enjoyed the college life and was happy to be back. Even his fun, happy times in College couldn't hide the reality and it was a matter of time before the monster inside Bundy came out.

On Saturday January 14th, Bundy broke into Florida State University's Chi Omega sorority house where he bludgeoned and strangled to death two women, raping one of them and viciously biting her on her buttocks and one nipple. He beat two other girls over the head and before he could kill them, their fellow roommate Nita Neary who came home early and caught Bundy in the act. Nita Neary came home around 3 a.m. and noticed the front door to the house was ajar. As she entered she heard hurried footsteps above going toward the stairway. She hid in a doorway and watched as a man wearing a blue cap and carrying a log left the house. Upstairs she found her roommates. Two were dead, two others severely wounded. That same night another woman was attacked and the police found a mask on her floor identical to one found later in Bundy's car.

On February 9, 1978, Bundy killed again. This time it was 12-year-old Kimberly Leach, who he kidnapped then mutilated. Within a week of the disappearance of Kimberly, Bundy was arrested in Pensacola for driving a stolen vehicle. Investigators had eyewitnesses who identified Bundy at the dorm and at Kimberly's school. They also had physical evidence that linked him to the three murders, including a mold of the bite marks found on in the flesh of the sorority house victim. Bundy, still thinking he could beat a guilty verdict, turned down a plea bargain whereby he would plead guilty to killing the two sorority women and Kimberly LaFouche in exchange for three 25-year sentences. Bundy went on trial in Florida on June 25, 1979 for the murders of the sorority women. The trial was televised and Bundy played up to the media when on occasion he acted as his own attorney. Bundy was found guilty on both murder charges and given two death sentences by means of the electric chair. On January 7, 1980, Bundy went on trial for killing Kimberly Leach. This time he allowed his attorney's to represent him. They decided on an insanity plea, the only defense possible with the amount of evidence the state had against him. Bundy's behavior was much different during this trial than the previous one. He displayed fits of anger, slouched in his chair, and his collegiate look was sometimes replaced with a haunting glare. Bundy was found guilty and received a third death sentence.

During the sentencing phase, Bundy surprised everyone by calling Carol Boone as a character witness and marrying her while she was on the witness stand. Boone was convinced of Bundy's innocence. She later gave birth to Bundy's child, a little girl who Bundy adored. In time Boone divorced Bundy after realizing he was guilty of the horrific crimes.

After endless appeals Bundy's last stay of execution was on January 17, 1989. Prior to being put to death Bundy gave the details of more than fifty women he had murdered to Washington State Attorney Generals chief investigator, Dr. Bob Keppel. He also confessed to keeping the heads of some of his victims at his home plus to engaging in necrophilia with some of his victims. In his final interview he blamed his exposure to pornography at an impressionable age as being the stimulant behind his murderous obsessions.

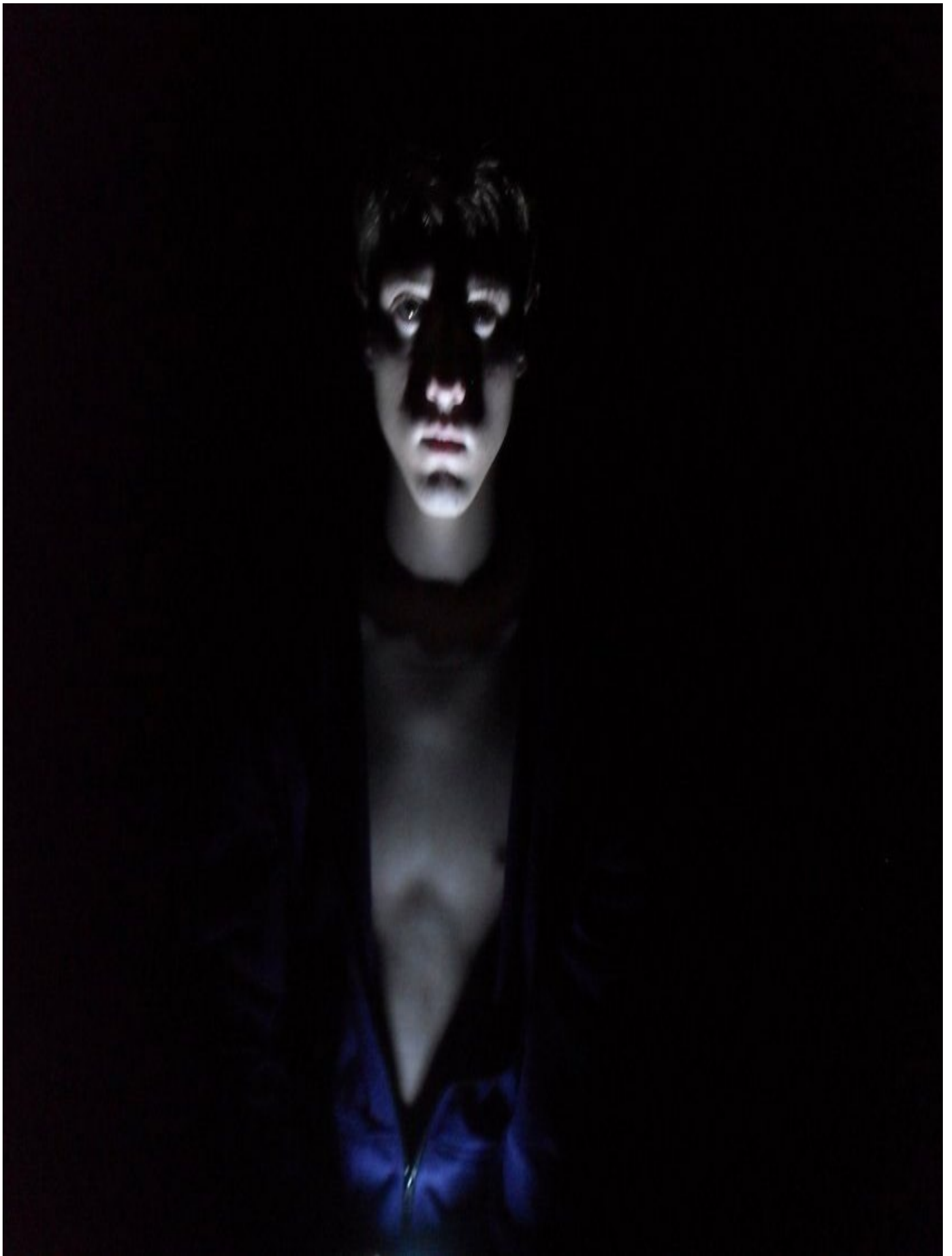
Many directly involved with Bundy believed he murdered at least 100 women.

The electrocution of Ted Bundy went as scheduled amid a carnival like atmosphere outside the prison. On January 24, 1989, Theodore Bundy died at around 7:13 a.m. as crowds outside cheered his death.

My thoughts on Ted Bundy are, he's been "wronged" by women in his life. He thought his real mother was his sister and his grandmother was his mother. His first real love dumped him because he didn't have the qualities she wanted. He felt like he needed to get revenge on women since every time he sees a woman he remembers all the pain and hurt he suffered because of it. Ted Bundy showed America that even pure evil can look damn good.



Ted Bundy image by Wolvaria: <http://wolvaria.deviantart.com/>



<http://decanith.deviantart.com/>

Hanging on a Hook: Fantasy Transmission #12

In the darkness is where you will find me.

My lips will be on your neck and when I wrap my arms around you, you will release an audible gasp because you will know that I own you. I have been dreaming of this moment for a very long time, there is nothing more beautiful or precious than seeing you like this, on a hook. The cold steel against your nipples, the chains must burn with cold against your naked prone body. How long have they left you hanging like this? Your arms are raised above your head, they must be aching but I won't unlock the handcuffs. Do you really think I will let you go? They brought you to me as a gift. They know what I like.

Your skin is a playground for my tongue. I listen to you whisper and beg, "Stop" through the tears but the truth is, you like this because soon your cries turn into moans of pleasure. I reach between your legs and grab your (insert sexual organ type here), you cry out in excitement. Not even your spouse has touched you like that in years. The fear only enhances this, not knowing what I look like or who I am even though I have watched you for months, almost two years now but you have never seen my face. I have written poems about you, I have plastered collages of you from photographs on the walls of my apartment. I stopped keeping track after I had taken over 500 photographs, when the walls were filled, I just glued them over each other. Close-ups of your face. I broke into your house while you were sleeping once and your spouse (gender pronoun irrelevant to subject matter) was out of town.

I listened to the sound of your breath and felt your skin, you moved for a moment and my heart was pounding in my chest. I was so afraid you were going to wake up and see me. But you didn't. I watch your daughter at school in the playground, did you know the other kids pick on her? Did you know she eats lunch alone? One day I went to talk to her and I took her out for ice cream and told her to keep it a secret. I told her to call me (Uncle/Aunt) Pat and when she wasn't paying attention, I took a small strand of her hair. I have it at home in a glass case and when I'm lonely I play with it. It's as close as I can get to you, through your DNA.

I considered killing your (husband/wife) so many times but I didn't want to destroy you completely, I wanted to leave you with some sort of hope. I thought it might make you more, susceptible to my charms. I dig my fingernails across your skin then, drawing blood and I listen to you scream. Pain has turned into pleasure, I am inside you, I am fucking you, pulling your hair, raping you, cutting up your face with the knife and you are screaming but it only excites me more and---

Transmission ends.

"I wasn't done," I tell Mr. Simmons.

He smiles, "Fifty more credits."

I hand him the money, "Put me back in the machine."

"Any requests?" he asks.

"Yes, I would like to be murdered now."



<http://www.facebook.com/MaliceArtwork>

CHANGING CHANTAL C. BEAULNE

Sarah is changing again.
She made him promise not to peek.
He was supposed to wait in the kitchen.

Instead he's outside her bedroom door.

He can feel the hormones rushing through his veins
Carrying his common sense
Through his liver
And away.

The knob is cool in his sweaty hand.
Is she facing towards the door?
He wonders. *Or away?*
He waits another heartbeat.
Is she naked enough yet?
Sarah had changed a lot today
Emerging each time in an outfit
More spectacular than the last.

He wonders again what she looks like
Underneath the clothes.
That's what counts -
That's why he could wear a stained T-shirt &
His greasy baseball cap
And still be with Sarah.


He isn't sure if he opened it
Or just breathed too hard on the wood.
But the door swings open.

The room is darker than expected.
It takes a while to make her out.

Her back is to him
It is nearly as beautiful as her front.

Each of her ribs is a knife of moonlight as she stretches
Removing her bra.
She relaxes. They slip into fleshy obscurity.

His eyes caress what his hands dare not.



She fumbles with something at her front
And he hears a zipping noise.

Confused, he wonders. *Sarah is naked;*
What else is there to take off?

Her skins hits the floor with a muffled thump
To lie crumpled with her clothes.

He stares at her face
On the floor
Lying flat and slack.
It is ugly.
It is torn
Warped.
Worn.

Something is stretching
Unfurling where Sarah had been.

The scream started in an organ
No dissection has ever found.
It scrabbles up his throat
Erupting
Fleeing.

Hanging on the door's other side
Is a different Sarah
Fresh and New
She would be beautiful
If she wasn't two inches thick.
And eyeless.
Her eyes were always her prettiest feature.

Sarah's looking at him now
With those beautiful blue eyes
Wider now than before
Lidless.
They don't
Can't
Blink.

He closes his eyes
Chooses darkness over ugliness
But as she begins
They are forced open
To watch
As he changes
Stripped

Beyond naked.

Later, Sarah is going out
She is rather beautiful
Despite the cap
& stained shirt
But it's what under there
That's important.

So she carries a large purse
Packed with ice.
They never last long
As Lovers
Or Like This.
She knows that, so she puts her makeup on
Leaves her door unlocked
And changes
Often.

NICOTINE FLAVORED KISSES

By Mark Johnson-Taylor

Every night is the same
Long strolls up and down the avenue
Limp cigarettes and protection resides dutiful in her purse
It's nothing more than a mere job in her mind
Sweaty palms, sore feet and a broken smile greet shady strangers
Her body becomes the merchandise
Love can be bought with currency
Secrets and filthy grins of nameless patrons etched in her memories
She has become emotionless as dirty hands caress her figure
Her role is a friend, a lover but never a wife
As lips touch she releases her pain
Something as simple as skin touching
She transmits the abuse, abandonment and the long nights
The lack of compassion from relatives, the beginning of the end in her mind
The dreams of a better existence to save her from the night
None of her clients hear the horrific wails of her body
Selfishness is the only entity present
Every night is the same
She tells a story and no one listens
To her pain transmitted through nicotine flavored kisses



<http://www.etsy.com/shop/runkpockart>

Morphology: the Sexual Perversions of Steve Hurd

Though prone to periods of wanderlust, I have been stuck in The Appalachian Mountains for what has seemed like an eternity. I began to alter my surroundings in the early 2000s, starting with decoupageing every flat surface I could find. People found these projects unusual, but interesting, as nobody else had neither coffee tables nor bookcases that were also 3D collages. In 2008, my left leg was crushed by 12000 pounds, and I had to learn to walk again. This lengthy process involved hours of rehabilitation, copious amounts of drugs, and three surgeries. After surgery in 2009, I died briefly. In between praying for death and being riddled with crippling pain, and having a newly found abundance of free time, I continued to make mixed-media art and decoupage over everything.

Last year I started making jewelry. I bought a Dremel, and started altering little found objects in to jewelry. These projects eventually grew in to what is seen here, and continue to grow, with works completed measuring 3-4 feet. A life-long horror-movie and culture fan, I simply channel years of dark images and thoughts in to the discarded objects, forgotten holiday decorations, and pieces of antique gadgetry that I acquire.

Almost every element in these works are altered before being assembled, from the focal pieces to the tiniest hardware, from simple dry-brushing to complete modification. I have never received any art-training, but have always been artistically inclined. I offer my works for sale at <http://www.etsy.com/shop/runkpockart>.

Currently I am studying psychology at The University of Pittsburgh. A successful salesman and online business owner in the past, after the changes that came from my industrial accident, and the life and death repercussions accompanying this caused me to pursue an education after several years of working. Last year, I won a business grant competition sponsored by the school, and have undertaken an initiative to help expose unknown artists. The overall goal is to seek funding for kiosks operating in highly visible areas, that will only sell work by artists from their location.

The sculptures on page 25 also belongs to Mr. Hurd.







MALICE BATHORY

THE END.

JOSH ROKLISEK

This empty feeling is strange, maybe because the last time I was here I could hardly move in the crowd. Now not a soul stirs on this lonely 46th and Broadway intersection. As I navigate the large piles of debris, I look at the desolate buildings and wonder how we got here. What kind of emotion could cause any human to do such a thing? Hate? No it is much more than that; there's not enough hate on earth to cause this. It seems only something inhuman could do such a thing, at least that's what I thought; I guess I was wrong. What's done is done, there is no changing the past; and even if there were some way to go back, I feel there is little I could do anyways. It seems only yesterday these streets were filled with people; they're probably all dead now—hopefully in the explosions. Those of us that survived the explosions suffer a fate worse than death. Starvation and thirst take hold of all of us that are left to see these forsaken streets.

As I continue past the destruction of the human condition I notice something in a pile of rubble. One little dirty lump of fur about four feet from the ground, sticking out between some broken concrete. My heart stops as I slowly recognize this mundane object. As I clear the debris I see a head with velvet black eyes. Those eyes pierce my soul as no mere mortal could. As I pull this child's toy from its crushing bondage I feel some stir of emotion, is it joy? I can't remember what that feels like for sure.

I clean it off one bit at a time: first the head, then the torso, and finally the legs. I savor this feeling, this joy that has been so lost in my depressed state. Slowly my emotions fade to the recognizable cynicism and despair, and I fall into my normal state of depression. The little girl that owned this small thing that brought her happiness is dead; I know it deep in my soul, she is gone. It's ironic I guess, the thing that probably caused this small child to feel secure has crushed me, crushed my very soul.

I cling to this thing and keep walking forward, depression seeping through my thoughts. I'm not sure how much longer I'll make it, but something drives me forward. As I keep walking all that surrounds me is destruction. All feelings leave me as I fall into numbness. I stop moving and just stand there, holding onto my only companion. I've made it to the Upper Bay. I look over the cold water and feel dead. I need to be away from here, anywhere but here, so I retreat to my mind into my memories of a happier time.

I could feel the sun on my face as we pulled into the beach in San Diego. My wife was asleep in the seat next to me and my daughter in the back holding on to the bear that she loved so much. I remember buying it for her the day she was born.

"Wake up!" I said as I opened the car door and we headed out into the hot California sun.

As we walked towards the ocean my daughter stared in bewilderment at the vast scenery before her. She looked up at me and asked, "Daddy! Can you swim to the other side?"

I just laughed and said, "No honey, probably not."

That moment seemed so insignificant back then. In fact I can't even remember most of that day anyway. The only other thing I remember is when my daughter asked me why they were leaving before me. It was a stupid reason, probably business. I should have gone with them. I should have realized how little time I had left.

I guess that's all in the past now. As I hold my daughter's teddy bear and gaze at the bay, I come back to reality. Oh what I would give for just one more moment with them. I remember her precious smile as the bullet enters my brain and the gun hits the ground. In my last waking moments I feel my daughter's presence.

FEATURE:

BLEEDING INK COMICS

AN OVERVIEW BY DANIEL W. GONZALES



Chapel is a story of a man who lives in a cyberpunk world, almost of the Philip K. Dick dystopian variety and like “I, Robot” but more pornographic, he doesn’t like A.I.’s. In a world where sexdroids murder their masters and robots are looking for regular jobs, Chapel is a relic. He is the very stereotype of the bad cop who doesn’t want to conform to a swiftly changing world. Even though he is a dick, we can relate to him.

So when he is beaten beyond recognition or hope for survival and must become what he hates most, a cybernetic being, it is the beginning of a compelling story.

Even though the scenario may seem a little familiar, the gritty quality of the art and the noirish style of the writing help propel it from being another future dystopia cliché.

Demigods is a complete 180 from Chapel. It’s premise seems a bit like “The Island” at first but these people aren’t being harvested for body parts. It shows us a group of immaculate beings which the art reflects very well with its rich color and smooth sculpted looking bodies of its characters. In this dystopia, an industry called Paragon has been injecting healthy orphan babies with a drug called MK-12 and turning them into super soldiers from birth. OR so you think. Quickly things turn around and our characters learn that everything they have been told their entire lives was a lie. Many of the characters have various powers like telepathy, super-strength and mind control due to the drugs they were given. There is an almost Anime vibe to the comic which isn’t a bad thing, it’s reminiscent of Akira and other really great anime that is action based rather than trading card based of the “gotta catch ‘em all” variety.

Patriot is a stunning piece of work reminiscent of the glory days of Superman or a hero of a Captain America like stature who symbolically represents the American Way. So it is especially twisted when we



learn that a “superman” like this has a brain tumor and is going to die. He goes to tell his son as well as his “Justice League” and he announces his plan to eradicate all of his enemies so that they will not bother the world anymore after he is gone. It’s like, what if Superman finally decided to kill Lex Luthor or Batman just snapped the Joker’s neck and put him out of his misery? It’s a great premise for a comic. The story is very edgy like something Warren Ellis would write, the dialogue is believable and the art is fantastic. This might just be the breakout book for the company.

Warzone is the story of an IRAQ war vet turned drug addict. While Sensory Distortion is the kickstarter funded graphic novel, 86 pages of pure madness. It takes the simple premise of college kids out for a little weekend fun and then offers us an interesting twist. Not a “Cabin in the Woods” twist but interesting nonetheless, the group’s mushrooms are destroyed after they have a fit of paranoia being stopped by a cop so one of them seeks out other psychedelic substances. He approaches

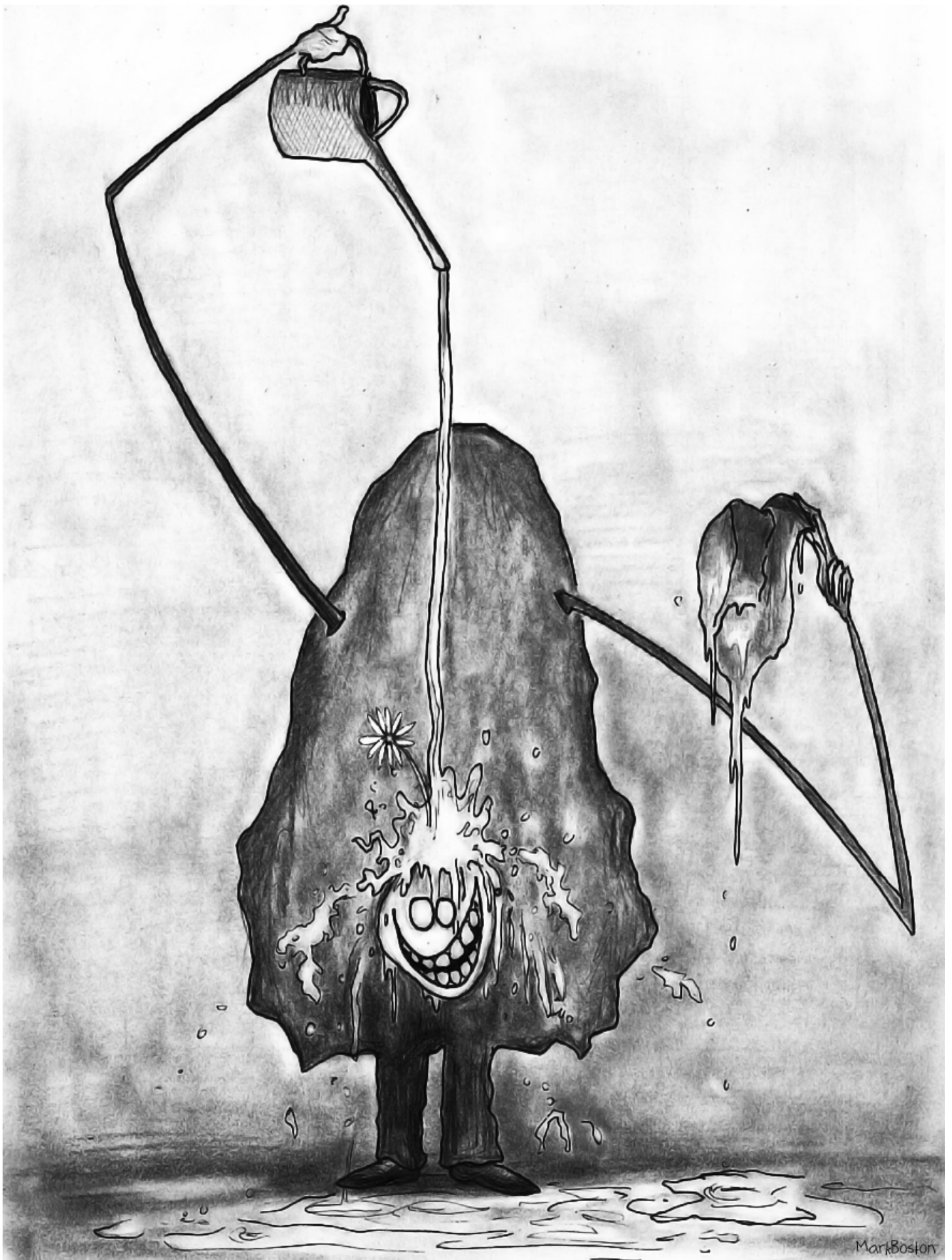
a young Native American boy who gives him a strange yellow plant called “devil’s weed” and asks them to boil it and drink it. It turns into a drug and sex fueled weekend of debauchery which seems to end quickly. What they don’t know is that once the drug is in their systems, they must face their worst fears and horrors in order to overcome it. The Native American teen is asskicked by his grandfather who makes him take him to the teens he sold the devil’s weed to. They are back in their regular daily lives except now they are all feeling the effects. I won’t spoil it for you but the art is perfect for the surreal imagery and strange psychosis that follows later in the story. Everything from binge eating to extreme paranoia and childhood memories of sexual abuse are revealed. The story takes a turn for the even darker then as one girl must face off with her psycho step-father. Overall, the story is engaging, the art is

moody and fits the tone of the story and it is like a good horror flick that I wouldn’t find paying to see.

All the works from Bleeding Ink Productions are written and created by Jesse Grillo. The company was founded back in February but Grilo has been working on comics for over 3 years and many of these are a labor of love. He grew up reading Image Comics and is a fan of other indie companies like Avatar Comics. He is the main marketer and promoter of these comics. His website can be found at:



<http://www.bleedinginkproductions.com/>



I Didn't Mean To Be Kevin by Caleb J. Ross

A review by Courtney Alsop

Ross describes himself as writing domestic grotesque fiction or grotesque family fiction, meaning that his work has family dynamics and the grotesque thrown into a blender and puréed. In the case of *I Didn't Mean To Be Kevin*, we get absent parents and body parts in human part museums. This 2012 novel is easily comparable in subject matter to Chuck Palahniuk and Kurt Vonnegut with satisfying results. It follows twenty-two-year-old Jackson Jacoby who lives, quite frankly, in a directionless and nihilistic life. He lives a life of abandonment because his father died when he was young and the relationship with his mother ended when he was only ten-years-old. One day he stumbles upon an ad from a mother looking for her son, Kevin. A misunderstanding with a prostitute leads him to accidentally calling this distressed mother and suddenly he begins to pretend to be the lost son. The story then becomes a road trip tale when he goes to meet this mother and to fulfill that lost part of him. Along the way he meets other motherless men and together they leave behind irreparable paths of destruction.

Ross has crafted a splendid story of identity and validation when one has no roots or beginnings. During the course of the novel Jackson spreads the tale of his own missing ear, the human appendage trade, and the story of one Marion Garza. Despite the disbelief of those he encounters, he has planted what little he has of his identity in these tales.

When I first began reading, I had no idea what to expect. For a while, I had no idea where it was going, and suddenly the narrative takes a sharp corner into road trip fiction. Just like Jackson, the text rolls almost aimlessly along until it has a definite purpose.

Do you really need family? Who wants the burden of being somebody's son? When you lose that special connection to this life, why do you stick around? With the human body part trade, at least you can have a tangible part of someone in your hand even after they have left your life.

Butterfly Potion: Book Review By Brittany Warren

Butterfly Potion, while not a long story certainly packs a punch in the emotion department. In the story, we're introduced to the protagonist, Perry. He is a man of many regrets and wastes his life (and probably sickly-looking liver) away at the bottom of the bottle.

Perry wakes up after suffering a blackout bruised and battered and looking for answers as to how he wound up that way. He seeks comfort in the beautiful Talia, who teaches him that there's more to one's life than just concrete mistakes, although in my honest opinion, she's not the best role-model considering that she drinks her life away just as much as Perry, and also doesn't live the best life.

My only problem with the story is that, while containing a hint of darkness, it just doesn't feel like a Horror story to me. I feel that a lot more could've been added to it to meet the quota of "downright creepy." However, this certainly doesn't take away from the fact that it is a great story, worthy of praise.

Mr. Zelazny's writing is flawless and very convicting; it hooked me from the beginning. He weaves a tale that breathes true life into the pages; a tale that will not be forgotten in my mind, as well as the minds of many others.

RELAX, IT'S ONLY SEX AND DEATH



<http://anathemaphotography.com/>

H: A GALLERY OF THE GROTESQUE

















<http://diamoneyes.deviantart.com/>

DON'T CRY

KIRBY ISRAELSON

I was in love.

Completely, utterly, and miserably in love.

I say miserably because when I say I was in love, I truly just mean I. Me. Only me. Always and forever and simply me, because the man I loved would never love me back.

I do not say this to inspire sympathy, rather I say it to instill understanding. Understanding that this precious and pitiful love of mine is not a love that is blind, but instead a love that is all too fully aware. Aware of the harsh and lonely world it survives in, and aware that it will always continue in a solitary existence.

Now, just because I said I understood this fact, this fact of unrequited love, does not mean my pain had lessened by any degree. So, in order to ease the pain of not knowing the love I so craved, I sought to know the lust of another who craved me.

He was disgusting.

No, really now, that just isn't fair. He was a fine man, a gentle man. A man lost to waves of passions, yes, but he never sought to hurt me. He desired my heart as well as my body, it was simply I who could not reciprocate. The only way this man had ever let me down was by not being the man I wanted. And really, that was only my own fault, not his. Never his.

And so we continued.

Meanwhile, when I was not drowning my sorrows in the arms of an unloved man, I was comforting the anguish of my closest friend. She was beautiful and she was kind, but the world she was living in was slowly washing her away. She was indebted to a harsh and cruel man. A man so unlike the man I loved, and so unlike the man who loved me. A man whom I thankfully did not know personally, but my friend, well, she knew him all too well.

She knew him every time he looked at her. She knew him every time his shadow fell over hers. She knew him every time he forced her down, again and again, over and over. She knew him as her mind was breaking, slowing leaking from the cracks he left in her skin.

One day she called me in a panic.

I quickly went to her side, selflessly eager to ease her pain, but selfishly needing a distraction from my own world of suffering. The strength of her disaster meant I was always willing to shoulder her burdens.

But when I arrived, the scene was not what I had anticipated. She was raving. She was crazy. She was mad. She threw things at me, screamed nonsense syllables, and attacked her body in a way that was wholly and primitively vicious. As I ran to her side she looked me straight in the eyes, and for the first time I felt the cool rush of fear.

Her eyes were ice cold.

She called me her lamb as she left me in her place. An offering to an angry, abusive, and rapist God, whom she knew all too well.

When I awoke he was telling me to take off my clothes.

My head was aching, remnants of the blow she had incapacitated me with, and my vision was blurred. In the dark I was unable to decipher who, or what, was around me, and so I began to crawl in whichever direction I deemed to be away.

Away from the voice that I had heard moments before. Away from the voice that crept deep inside my bones. Away from the voice that resurrected memories better left buried. Away from the voice that with only a few sparse words, already told me all too much about the man I thought I didn't know.

But I did. I knew him. And just like her, I knew him all too well.

I heard the recognition in his laughter as he gripped my ankle. The floor seemed to ripple beneath me as he dragged me closer and I lost all sense of myself. Reality blurred into a memory, and both forged together to create the nightmare that would be my undoing. For this time his grip was just a little too tight, and a little too careless. The floor seemed to sink beneath me as his seed clawed his way inside of me, and my lungs finally gave their last breath of protest.

The fingernails I had left in the floorboard were the only evidence of my struggle, pitifully settled beside my ravaged corpse.

And the echoes of my screams are still ringing in your ears.

Soon afterward, the God that never was, the one that I knew all too well, realized he was violating a corpse and in his disgust, he fled.

Soon afterward, the friend who had betrayed me in her sorrow discovered my fate, and fell to her knees in regret.

Soon afterward, the one that used to be me felt peace for the first time. Peace in no longer needing breath. Peace in no longer needing life. Peace in no longer needing love.

Peace.

And so I stood at her shoulder, her sadly hunched shoulder that shook in time with her sobs above my remains, and I placed my hand gently upon it.

"Don't cry," I said.

"Don't cry."





<http://www.facebook.com/MaliceArtwork>

LIMBO

DUSTIN TAYLOR

Darkness. Alone, the sound of your breathing echoing against some far away wall. Reaching out in front, then sweeping your arms outward, empty air bristles the hair on them. Bending down, your fingertips brush along the smooth, cold surface below. You tap your knuckle against it. The thud sounds like thick metal.

Thump...thump...Thump...thump...Thump.

The beat of your heart quickens as you edge forward into the blackness.

Shhaa-ahh. Shhaa-ahh. Shhaa-ahh.

Sliding your feet along the ground in slow, careful steps, a pebble clatters across the smooth, hard surface beneath you when you kick it away.

Tink Tink Tink tink tink tink.

Off in the distance, the sound of heavy, booted footsteps drifts down from above, their pace matching that of your heart.

Thud Thud Thud thud thud thud... thud thud thud Thud Thud Thud.

You begin walking towards them. They must be in a large room, as the footsteps pace back and forth quite a distance to either side. As you approach it, your eyes begin to adjust to the dull flecks of light that appear down to your left. The movement above keeps up its feverish pace, keeping rhythm with the beat of your heart, scuffling shoes and echoing breaths. The melodic harmony flows as if it were a river, and Mother Nature stood composing on a small, green grass island above, with the sweet vocals of cheerful birdsong around. A natural, musical masterpiece.

You turn to the speckling, blinking lights, so far away, yet so close. The melody around sweeps you towards it. It guides you, one careful, sliding step after another. Closer and closer, each scampering rock adding in their own piece of percussion to the heaven-sent orchestra.

Damn it. This can't be right.

How did you get here, alone in this darkness?

The lights grow larger and the sounds louder with each step you take. They spread out, each splitting off like cells in mitosis: growing, morphing, reproducing, creating a massive, white fly's eye. The individual portions blink, dancing with one another to the music.

Where were you before here?

Where is here?

Soon the lights stretch out across the horizon - except there isn't one. The lights are circular, even though you stand in the middle it reaches as far as you can see. They blaze brighter, but do not blind. That must be the blinking you saw far behind.

Looking down at what you walk on, the lights reveal a pattern lining the ground. Studying closer, you find the familiar shape of bricks, though not of formed mud or clay. It reflects the light as if they are mirrors, shining bright silver in front of you, polished black back behind.

The lights are an arm's length from you now. Reaching out, your fingers run across the surface, sending out ripples across as if it were a still pond. The music is deafening, but you still hear the footsteps approach from the blackness you came from. Spinning around on your heels, you turn to face their creator.

Darkness. There is nothing there but darkness. The footsteps draw closer.

It is almost upon you when its shape becomes clear, a shadowy figure among the night. Like a black hole, it seems to swallow the light around it, darker than the blackened background. It walks up and stands beside you, revealing the blackness to be a cloak, covering whatever lie beneath from its rounded top to the mirrored floor below.

"Who are you?" you ask, yelling to be heard above the blaring music. It stands there, silent and faceless. You can feel it peering at you, sending a shiver up your spine. When it speaks, it sounds more like low, deep growl than a voice.

"Death."

The sinister voice penetrates your mind, cutting straight through the music as if it didn't exist. You reel backwards, almost stumbling over your own feet.

"Two choices are yours."

Where are you? Where were you before this place?

These questions lose all meaning to a much more powerful one.

Why are you here?

"Stay and go mad."

"Or go." The cloak raises, pointing toward the wall of light.

"Why should I believe you," you scream at the menacing figure towering over you, the questions running rampant in your mind, angering you more with every word Death says.

"Because I said so." His growl taunts.

"Why am I here?"

"You'll never understand." He turns, and walks back into the darkness, ignoring your cries for him to stop. A moment later he is gone.

The music rages on. It fills every crevice and cavern of your mind. There is no escaping it.

Taking a deep breath, you reach out for the puddle of light. Your hand slips through, ripples spreading out like a tsunami across the sea. It envelopes you in warmth as more of your arm breaches the event horizon.

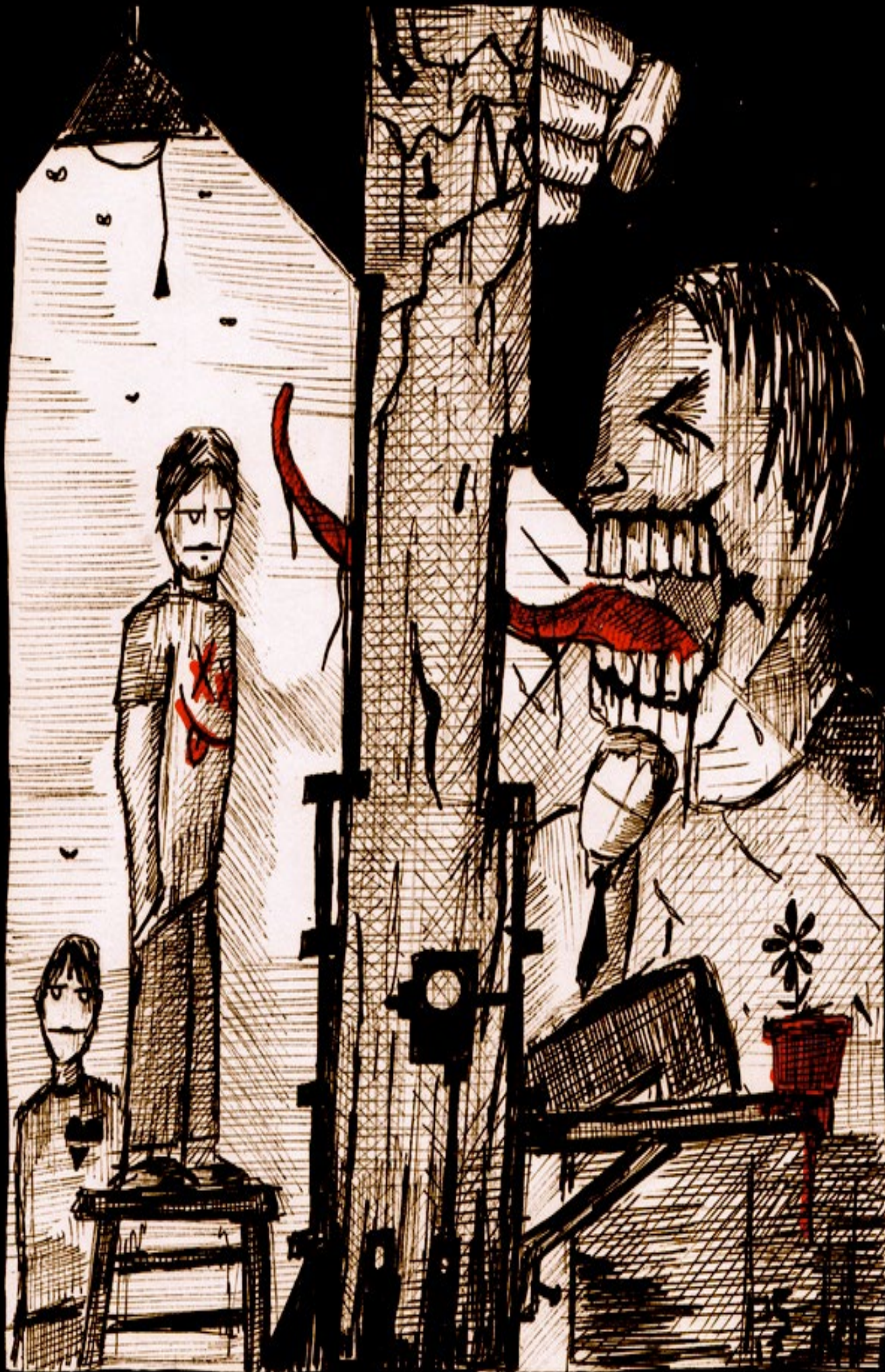


PERVERSION AND DESPAIR A GALLERY BY PHIL STEVENS















7 Questions with a Published Writer:

Douglas Clegg

Interview by Daniel William Gonzales

1. In many ways you are considered a pioneer of the internet novel. Your novel, “Naomi” was the internet’s first publisher sponsored e-novel. Do you sort of see yourself as a seer of the cyberspace e-publishing revolution?

No, but I do see myself among the early pioneers and adopters of this form. In 1999, I launched Naomi the first email serial (eSerial) novel sponsored by a NY publisher from my newsletter at <http://DouglasClegg.com/newsletter>.

In about 2000 (perhaps even 1999) I had one of the earliest eReaders -- the Rocket eBook Reader. In many ways, it’s still a favorite. I’d take it on the subways in New York and read constantly -- it showed me the ease of what ebooks would become.

It made sense to me -- put 50 books or more on an eReader, and travel with it, read anywhere, anytime. eBooks didn’t quite take off back then, although they had a lively birth among many writers who are now producing fiction for the current crop of eBook devices.

I lament the slow erosion of the influence of the print book as much as anyone. And it’s a very slow erosion -- people still buy print, but now the POD technologies are such that any writer can produce her or his novel very cheaply in print, and get it up for distribution at major and minor online booksellers. I haven’t delved into POD yet, but it’s another technology that has changed the landscape as a result of digital files and online sellers.

Having said this, again, I’m no seer. My friend, bestselling novelist and journalist M.J. Rose is - she predicted a lot of what’s happening now way back in the late ‘90s and early ‘00s. She can really predict the evolution of the book, so can my friend Matt Schwartz, who’s a V.P. at Random House but also ran Shocklines.com and has worked in various aspects of digital and book business for many years.

I listen to smart people, but I have no insight into “what’s next.”

2. Cemetery Dance has been a big supporter of you as well, they bought your email novel, Nightmare House and took a chance on you when horror was sort of in a decline. What do you think the key is to maintaining success in such a fickle industry as horror?

You’re correct -- they are a huge supporter of my fiction. I am very fortunate to be involved with them. Cemetery Dance is run by a smart guy -- Richard Chizmar -- and smart people, so I think it was a good bet on their side.

Cemetery Dance has always been on the cutting edge of the evolution of the horror and suspense novel. I wouldn't be surprised if they keep making these kinds of inroads into "what's next" for these genres and fiction in general.

Regarding a key to maintaining success: be smart, listen to smart people (and develop good judgment about what's smart and what's just blather), and write the best novels you can.

On the other hand, eh, success. What does it mean? To me, success is writing a really great book. I often wonder if those writers who make 5-10 million a year (there are some) feel successful or if they just feel like every other writer -- sitting in a little room, typing out the words, trying to make it come alive on the page and worrying that it might not happen.

And all industries are fickle. So are a lot of people. So, big deal. Even fickle can be fickle. Write your book, don't worry about some industry.

3. You named Purity as one of your favorite works on Twitter as something you would recommend to a first time reader, I thought it oozed a certain sensuality that was fascinating in a horror story. What role do you think sexuality should play in horror?

I think sexuality plays a role when it serves the story, and only then. I've written a few novels where sexuality and sex itself are important as a theme of the tale: Afterlife, Purity, Mordred, The Vampyricon, and The Necromancer.

For instance, in Afterlife, one of my thematic concerns was: how are we connected? How does someone truly get inside us?

So I explored an aspect of psychic phenomena as well as sex itself, as well as the idea of a meeting of minds, as well as belief. The story is really about a person coming to believe in something unseen, and her journey is through this terrifying landscape.

The sex is rough in that Afterlife -- mainly because it's about how someone gets inside you -- body and psyche both. It was necessary in order for the story to come alive around what the novel was genuinely about. Most readers don't need to know my thematic concerns. They're part of the reasons I write, but they're not necessarily why someone picks up a novel or downloads the eBook version.

Most of my novels aren't concerned with sex, and if they are, it's part of the love story within the novel and a very brief moment.

Purity however, deals with a wonderful sociopath named Owen, and Owen has studied people, he knows how to create a certain cause and effect with them. He also suffers from magical thinking, which may be his achilles heel. So while Owen isn't gay, he recognized another young man as more than casually-interested in him. He sees an opportunity to create an outcome that is self-serving. And that's where the fun begins.

In The Necromancer, the sex is part of Victoriana and debauchery and bawdiness -- it's a kind of elegant, ratty underworld of the 19th century in London. Justin, the protagonist, is a young man who has no sense of anything but the call of lust and a thirst for knowledge -- thus he is drawn to brothels and the shady side of the Victorian world.

Then again, most of my novels are novels of the supernatural -- either the perceived supernatural (as in Purity

and Bad Karma, where it's all in the mind and understanding of the character) or in the objective supernatural of the story (Afterlife, Goat Dance, You Come When I Call You.) Perception and reality are interesting to play with in a novel to bring out the psychological reality of character.

And so is sexuality, when it serves the story itself. Look, when you write about life -- even through the filter of the imagination, you write about everything.

4. You seem to play with medieval mythology a bit in some of your works like Mordred, Bastard Son and The Priest of Blood. You wrote the Vampyricon trilogy as well. What cultures do you find have the most interesting myths to work with?

All of them. We tell ourselves stories about the world in order to have the experience -- and the meaning -- of being alive. We are all storytellers. We want stories in our lives. Mythology is the word used to describe the intersection of psychological insight and wonder.

Stories also give meanings to our deaths, which is really the meaning of a relatively short lifespan -- the stories of our lives become part of the world when we're gone.

Even if that story is the armoire from the grandmother, the photograph found in the junk shop, the discovery of old newspapers in a house.

5. Where did you get your love of horror from?

I've thought about this for years. I've done interviews with people from other arts, where they've turned the tables and asked me. My mother always wondered. But I really think it was from my mother, who used to read to us when young -- often poetry, and often Poe's poetry, which led me to Poe, the gateway drug of horror lovers when young, often.

Supernatural Horror is a twin of Fantasy, and I've always loved the imagination as magic, so perhaps that's part of my love for it.

Ultimately, I love the imagination - in both the corners of light and dark, and you can't pretend one doesn't exist when the other does. Even in the best moments of life, something awful is happening, there is fear, there is the irrational thought of terror in a moment.

But I don't just love horror, and I take horror on a case-by-case basis. When we say the word "horror" do we mean suspense, gore, supernatural, psychological, dark fantasy, etc.? Horror is an umbrella term over many subgenres.

Some horror fiction I love, and some I just can't enjoy. I read fiction in all genres, and I think my real love in horror is gothic, going back to its earliest days of Charles Brockden Brown and Anne Radcliffe and even into Jane Eyre. Or further, back to Jacobean tragedy like The Duchess of Malfi or into the Elizabethan era with Hamlet or Christopher Marlowe's Dr. Faustus. Not to get too high faultin' -- I'm also a big fan of the movie Hocus Pocus. What can I say?

Now, the novel that got me wanting to write horror as a writer was probably Tom Tryon's The Other. I was about 14 when I read it. I'd been writing fiction since I was about 7 or 8. Earlier, I just told stories a lot. So when I read Tryon's novel -- a mega-bestseller at the time -- I realized what a writer could do with some skill as a novelist and still give that great shiver and shocking twist -- the fun of any popular novel.

Later, it was Stephen King and Peter Straub -- by the time I was in college -- whose novels I read on the sly between reading all those Elizabethan dramas. Straub may have showed me, more than any other writer, how to aim high from the genre ledge. Well, King, too. There's this interplay in the best of horror fiction between low and high drama, between the fun scare and the serious intent. I love that.

But even that's a narrow world. Sigrid Undset's an influence, so is Gabriel Garcia Marquez, so is Thomas Mann, so is Isak Dinesen. The more widely a writer reads, the more thrilling the process of writing and reading become.

6. Of all your books, which one are you most proud of? Which one was the hardest to write?

I'm proud of all of them in their own ways, but I think my best -- for reasons that may not be something readers always agree -- are *The Hour Before Dark*, *Neverland*, *Mordred Bastard Son*, *The Priest of Blood*, *Isis*, and *Purity*. And *The Nightmare Chronicles* and *The Machinery of Night*, too. But I am proud of all of them.

Even *The Abandoned*, the most over-the-top novel I've written, where the only plot was "Horror happens." It's a fun book, but I always warn readers about it -- it's not for the squeamish. It's Grand Guignol within my own sense of that. It's easy for a writer who approaches writing seriously to forget the fun.

What I'm writing right now is more in the territory of the dark fable. My novelette, *Dinner with the Cannibal Sisters* -- which, despite the title, may not be about cannibals at all -- will be out from Cemetery Dance Publications before the end of 2012. And my long-overdue novella, *Mr. Darkness*, also. And my current novel has taken me over, and I hope to get it to my agent by the fall of 2012.

I took four years to step back and not publish new fiction while I've re-studied and sharpened both my mind and my abilities toward the task of creating major fiction with a dark edge to it, and everything I love about fiction within it.

7. Do you think it's harder to scare people now than it used to be in the last few decades: are readers more jaded?

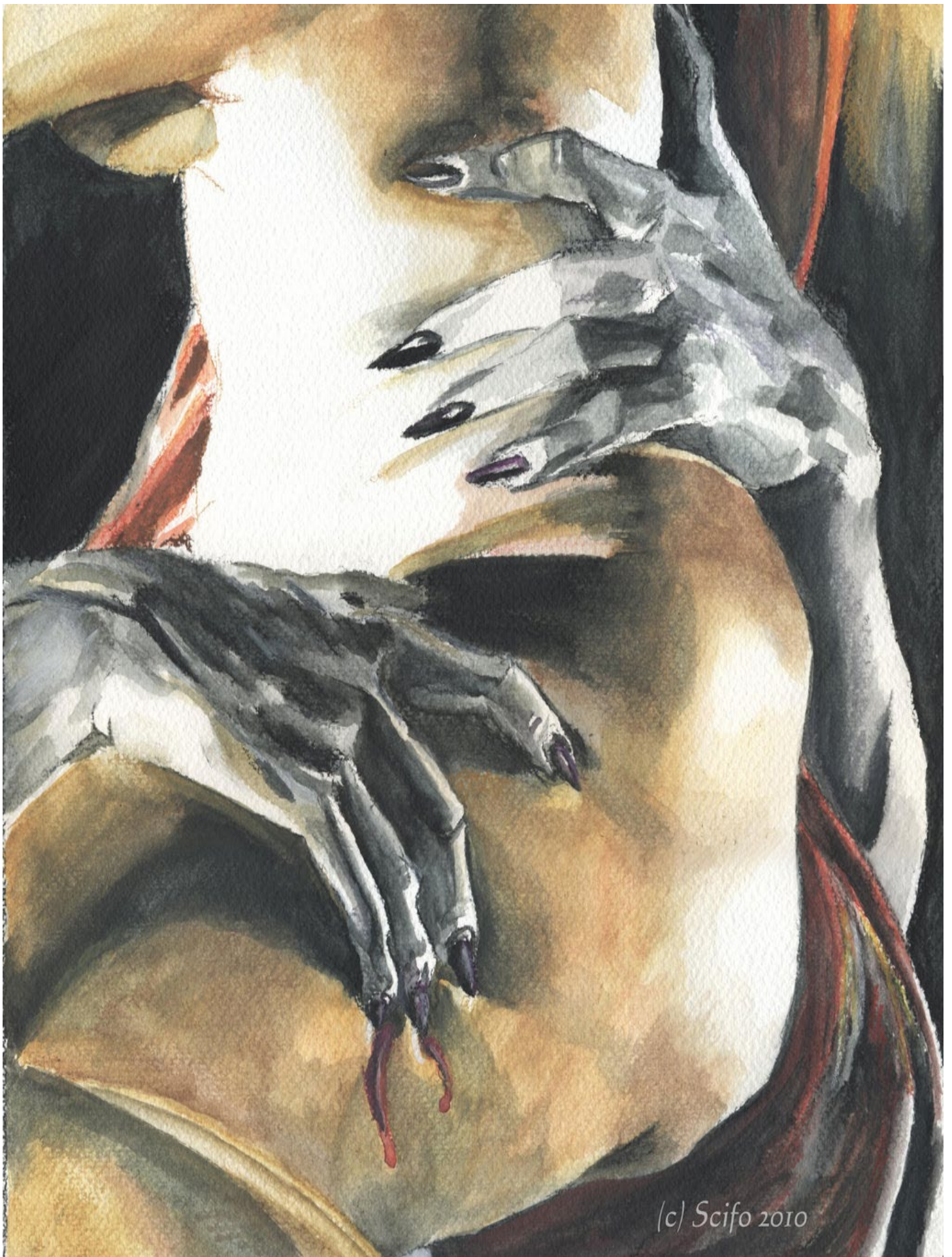
I've never been interested in scaring people. I'm more interested in characters who fascinate me, and seeing how they create their world.

But to be more direct: no, I don't think it's harder. Every generation feels jaded compared to the previous one, but they're not. The world is made up of innocents who dream they are sophisticates.

-- Douglas Clegg

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Casual Sex

Sean M. Thompson

Jack walked with the swagger of one with the strong hunch that raunchy sex is to be in the near future. In his right hand he held a brown paper bag. The bag had grease stains on its bottom corner, and the aroma of Chinese food within filled the hallway of the apartment complex. It was a Friday night, around seven, and Jocelyn wasn't expecting him. Hell, it was so early in the game he'd be happy if when he rang the doorbell she answered without a naked man standing beside her, pointing his erection at him. He was never very lucky in the Roman coliseum fight to the death known as dating. He hoped this girl was different, but hope in one hand and shit in the other, he thought. Still, he had his intuition, and his intuition was that this girl liked him a lot.

He was twenty-three, and fresh out of college. Point of fact, that was where he'd met Jocelyn. A shame really, he had met the tall red-headed girl, with those cute dimples of hers, at the tail end of his senior year. It was in a seminar on Hawthorne. He'd noticed her sitting alone one day, in one of the eateries located throughout the campus, and walked over. Jack asked her how she liked the class, and if they wanted to study together. A few months later, Jocelyn took him up on his studying offer. During the session, he learned she was the same age as him. That was one of his last nights in school, when they had both studied in the library for the final on Hawthorne's works. He had kept in touch through social networking sites, but hadn't seen her face to face in about a year. He hoped she hadn't gained two hundred pounds, or lost an eye. That would be exceedingly awkward.

The doorbell pierced through him like a bolt gun to the head of whatever poor cow had sacrificed itself to be his beef with broccoli. Anticipation of dinner and a good lay, or a bitter walk home in the rain permeated his mind. It was the moment of truth, and as the seconds ticked away Jack's confidence began to falter.

"Who is it?" Jocelyn yelled from behind the door.

"Jack," he yelled back, trying to keep his voice sounding as suave as possible.

A door unlocks, and a red haired twenty something steps into view. She wears a black t-shirt, stretched taut against two large and inviting breasts. Jack can't help but stare.

"I'm up here jackass," Jocelyn said.

Caught, Jack just shrugs his shoulders, and lifts his eyes to meet hers. Light blue eyes connect with his dark blue, and for a moment they both forget what they were doing. Then a car horn blares outside, and the two snap back to the jittery businessman known as reality.

"I brought Chinese," Jack said, and smiled.

No man with a hard on greeted him. Jocelyn looked nearly the same as the first time he'd seen her last year. When he had started to fantasize about being alone with her. About what he would do to her. When it was just the two of them.

Jocelyn smiled back, then gestured with her index finger for him to come inside. As he walked over the threshold, he checked out her ass, in all its stretch denim glory. Jack couldn't help but smirk evilly.

At a small wooden table, man and woman sit across from each other. Each has a plate in front of them, with noodles, and various meats in various sauces. The man is still staring at the woman's tits.

"All I'm saying is that you can't be too careful nowadays, I mean, take that crazy fuck whose been killing all those girls," Jocelyn said, navigating speech in between chews.

"Yeah, I heard about that girl they found last week," Jack said, eager to change the subject. Nothing turns a woman off sooner than talk of rapists and killers. At least, he thought, generally.

"So how's work going?" he asked. He didn't actually give a shit about the answer, but it helped people warm to you when you pretended to care.

"It's going alright, ya know, same old same old," Jocelyn said.

Well, good he thought to himself, as he nodded over the table, taking another forkful of noodle. She doesn't seem to want to talk about work.

"Well...actually, the other day my boss bitched me out pretty badly..."she began.

Awesome, so much for getting out of the bitch-a-thon, Jack thought. Her words washed over him like a gentle current, but if you asked him what she was saying, he would have to admit he had no idea.

Jack was still staring at Jocelyn's boobs.

...

“What do you think happens to us when we die?” Jocelyn asked him.

They were finished with dinner, and each had a plate before them on the small, wooden table, with a slice of pumpkin pie on it.

“I don’t know. I don’t really believe in a Heaven, or a Hell. But, I’d like to think that our energy lives on. This is a rather morbid conversation for a first date, isn’t it?”

“Who said this was a date?” Jocelyn asked.

“Well played,” Jack said.

“I think pretty close to what you think,” Jocelyn said.

“You aren’t just agreeing with me to please me, are you?”

“I’m not that type of girl, honey.”

“What do you feel like doing when we finish this pie?” he asked.

“Ice cream,” Jocelyn said.

“I had no idea I’d be eating this much tonight” Jack said, and laughed.

Jocelyn laughed too, and she looked into Jack’s eyes. There was a glimmer in them, which made his whole face light up. And she found herself thinking, I could fall in love with this man. She paused, and corrected herself. Who are you kidding, you fell in love with him a year ago, on that night you studied with him at the library. When it was just the two of you, and you walked home with him, because it was late, and who knew what crazies were out late at night?

The college was in Dedmirth, a town a half hour from Cape Cod. So, there probably wouldn’t have been any real crazies. Worst would have been some kid tripping his face off on acid. But, just the same, she’d felt more comfortable with Jack walking beside her, on that warm spring night. And holding his hand on the way back from the library to her dorm, that was when it first happened. When she truly fell in love with Jack for the first time.

They sat on a faded green couch, across from a thirty-five inch television screen. Upon the telly, a man with a gun chased another man with a gun. A shot fired onscreen as Jack worked his hand up the tight black cloth of Jocelyn’s t-shirt onto her left breast. He could feel a surge of blood flow into his crotch as he leaned in and planted his lips onto hers. Jocelyn sighed heavily, and quickly lifted her shirt up over her head tossing it to an undisclosed location. She placed her hands behind her back, unlatching her c cup confiner; threw it beside

the TV. Her skin glowed from the light off of the television, and her areolas tightened, exposed to the bare cold of the apartment.

“You want to pause this?” Jack asked her, in between kisses.

“Leave it on, it’ll mask the noises,” Jocelyn said.

She got up, and led him to her bedroom.

On her bed they rolled, warm sweaty flesh on warm sweaty flesh, rubbing together mixing fluids. Lips furiously entwined, until one of the two sets would escape, to lay claim to a nipple, or a neck. Jocelyn moved her head down Jack’s stomach, and he lay back and moaned. As her head bobbed up and down, Jack thought he heard a door open. He might have brought it up otherwise, but in these moments of pleasure all the doors in the hall could blow off the hinges for all he cared. He ran his hand down along her inner thigh. He slowed as he came closer to the glistening slit at the thighs upper most location. More moans escaped from both parties, as outside the rain attacked her bedroom window. It gave a rhythm to their movements, their caresses, their thrusts.

He lifted her, flipping her over onto her stomach on the bed. She propped herself onto her knees, arched her back, and took him inside her. The sensations sent a shiver through his legs, and he fell ever so slightly against her, which pushed him deeper still. From where he stood, he grabbed her hips, and pulled ghostly white skin towards him as they gyrated in unison. Grunts and sweat, frenzy and purpose mingled, and they fucked as if this night was there last.

He thrust faster, the familiar feel of ejaculation around the corner. Close, he was close, so close and any second he would pull out. Any second he would release his dick from the vice grip, and put an end to the tryst. Yes, he could feel it, and he was so close. So close, and he would expel semi-transparent fluid onto her ass. Maybe he’d even hit her in the back. You could never tell with a pop shot. Yes, yes, it was coming, and he adjusted his feet, preparing. Here we go, he thought.

The hand reached out of the darkness and grabbed him by the hair, before he was even sure what was happening.

She felt him get harder inside her, and she knew that he was going to cum soon. Shame too, a couple more minutes and she would be on number three. She was on birth control, hence had no idea where he would

finish. Her back, her face, her ass, in her mouth, or inside her, it was a mystery. He pulled out, and she felt a warm stream spray across her back, and her butt. Another, in close proximity to the first sloshed onto her skin, and she moaned, because she knew that's what you were supposed to do. Guys liked it when you did that; you had to act like it was the greatest thing in the world when they coated your back with that fucking sticky fluid. Otherwise it was a big to do, and a headache she wasn't willing to have. Better to just pretend for twenty to thirty seconds, then to argue for five to ten minutes.

Another larger stream hit her in the back of the head, soaking her hair.

"Fuck baby, that's a lot"

Another even larger stream hit her, and now her back was completely soaked.

"Jesus, Jack," she said, turning around to see the man who had this much semen in his balls.

But, when she looked back she noticed that Jack was not alone. Holding his head by the hair was a man, six feet or so, with a large Ginsu knife. The knife was decorated with an intricate design on the white handle, of a man killing a tiger. The knife was splashed with crimson.

The man with the knife wore black jeans, with a black hooded sweatshirt, and a black plain, plastic mask on underneath. As a result the only thing that stood out on him was the knife, and his eyes, a brilliant light blue, almost like those of a blind man. They stared out, the only gauge of emotion amidst this form in the dark.

Jack's throat was slit from ear to ear, and even as he gurgled she noticed that his cock was still hard. He sprayed blood from his throat, and some of it landed on her right breast. Her back was soaked with blood, and when she shifted off her knees and headed for the corner of the room, splashes of blood flew at the walls and onto the floor. The intruder was in pursuit. The man with the knife took a step toward her, wiping the blood off of the blade, onto his pants. When he had rubbed it off of both sides he spoke.

"It's my turn," he said.

First the intruder fucked her, the knife held mere inches away from the side of her neck, while he humped away on top of her. He came inside her, and shoved hard enough that she banged the top of her head on the headboard.

He made her get on her knees then, and he fucked her in the ass. He used some of the blood on his hands for lubrication, wiping it onto his shaft before he rammed it inside her asshole. She screamed as he shoved himself inside her, and saw spots. Jocelyn knew she would pass out soon. At one point she did.

When she came too he was kneeling over her with the knife pointed at her stomach. He had switched it

to his left hand.

“Be a shame to slice you open, such a sexy little thing like you,” he said.

She noticed that he flexed his right hand, made it into a fist, and then stretched the fingers out again.

“What are you gonna do?” Jocelyn asked, desperately hoping he couldn’t hear how scared she was. Oh please just make him stop, and make him leave, she thought. I don’t want to die, she thought. Please don’t let me die by the hand of this man, whose face I can’t even see.

“Whatever the fuck I feel like,” he responded. He lowered his face, so it was only inches from hers.

“Whatever the fuck I want to,” he said, and she felt his fingers inside her.

He started with three, then worked his way to four. By the time he got his thumb in she had blacked out once again. When she regained consciousness he was fisting her, and the pain was a throbbing agony she would never be able to forget. In its scalding embrace she knew her sanity was burned away. Yet, with this knowledge came a sudden surge of energy inside her.

She was not going to die this way.

She had to time this well if it was going to work. If she was off, it was certain that he would jam that knife into her. She counted in her head. At ten she would do it. Nine, and he was still fisting her, heavy breathing underneath the black plastic mask. Eight, and she could feel his knuckles on her cervix, and she screamed out in agony. Seven, and she looked down below the bed, saw Jack’s body and cried out in anguish. Six, and she would never be able to be whole again, not ever. Five, and the seconds passed like hours as she waited for her chance. Four and she gathered her strength. Three and she gathered her courage. Two, and she could almost see the smile beneath that mask, and she wanted to grab those lips and rip them off. One, and now she was ready and she tensed up and became the epitome of blind rage.

In one frenetic movement, she twisted off the bed, the man’s hand still deep inside her. She squeezed her legs together as she rolled off, determined to keep the hand locked in place. And when she landed she heard a satisfying crack, and she felt bone poking through the skin of his wrist inside her. It hurt, but the bone wasn’t far enough out to do her much damage. No more damage then had already been done, that was for sure.

The man cried out, and dropped the knife. It fell by her right leg, and she jerked upright and grabbed it. He punched her hard in the nose, and she almost dropped the knife. She heard an unearthly cry, muffled but still able to chill her to the bone. So she stabbed the knife into the source of that noise, deep into the man’s throat. A satisfying gurgling noise came from behind the mask, and she smiled wide. She carefully worked his hand out from inside her, and made sure to squeeze the bone poking out of his wrist as she did so. Oh no, you don’t get

off that easy, she thought to herself.

Jocelyn made her way down to the man's crotch. He had taken his pants off, so all she had to do was pull down his black briefs, and she could grab his scrotum. She pulled it down as far as she could, and then began to saw at the flesh on the top. His legs jerked violently up and down with each fresh slice, back and forth, back and forth, and she could see inside his balls. Blood sprayed from the destroyed top of his scrotum. She grabbed the tendrils inside his testicles, and pulled them. She wanted to see how far they could go before they ripped out completely. He banged his head onto the hard wood floor, over and over. She assumed it was in an attempt to knock himself out. Finally one of the elastic tubes ripped in two, and she could hear him gurgling, and damn if she didn't smile a little. She took the knife and swiftly sliced off the other. He banged his head once more, and then his body was still.

Jocelyn got up and walked over to the phone in her bedroom. She picked it up, and dialed 911. As she stood, waiting for a comforting voice, she noticed the front door open. She looked at the floor by her bed, and saw Jack's corpse, soaked in blood. She looked in her bedroom mirror, and saw she too was covered with dried blood. She didn't recognize the eyes that stared back at her through her reflection.

She collapsed to the floor and began to sob.





ALL THE LITTLE DEATHS

ANTHONY COWIN

If you listen over the shoulders in most horror circles you'd be convinced that horror is a metaphor for death, or to be more precise, the preparation of death. I mean it's obvious isn't it? All that stabbing and hacking. All the falling from rollercoasters and being chased by masked men wielding blood soaked chainsaws.

Wait, let's stop a minute and pull away from those wine soaked, cigarette fumed circles and think about this. Yes murder is obviously about the stalking reaper lurking in our shadows, just as torture is about the stresses and pains of life. But what place does sex have in all of this horror business?

Well let me spin the TV in your direction and show you some examples of what I think it all means, or at least why I think it's there in the first place. You may be surprised, you may be shocked, but I guess you'll just think I'm as mad as old Leatherface.

From the very origins of horror cinema the themes have included pursuit and murder of beautiful women. Not to mention recreation. In the 1910 version of 'Frankenstein' we first see man as God. The devilish doctor creates life without ever having to get into all that messy sex business. No, he prefers stitching together a jigsaw of stolen cadavers that have been marinating in embryonic fluids. *Nice work if you can get it.*

What about 'The Island of Lost Souls', 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde', 'The Mummy' and the constantly thinning 'Frankenstein' franchise? See a pattern emerging? This is about science creating life, or reanimating it at least. But there's a problem in all of these, they all go horribly wrong. In the pursuit of scientific creation without sex we end with a hell of lot of death. And this is only horror up to the 1930's!

Okay let's jump forward a few decades. The 1950s and '60s continued the roll out of the tired tropes and dull franchises. We did see the emergence of the creature feature that the paranoia of falling A-bombs produced. Dracula was still hanging around and zombies still did their soft shoe shuffle. But these were remnants of a horror past. Their identities now represented penetration and infection.

But something stirred beneath the nuclear paranoia and drug induced Cultural Revolution. The

master himself, Alfred Hitchcock brought horror to the mainstream in the first year of the flower power decade. He didn't use monsters, zombies or vampires. Though in a way Norman Bates was all of these things. With *Psycho*, horror became not only mainstream but intelligent. Yet it still had the jumps and scares to make your terrified date hold you close in fear, while keeping you awake long after the taste of popcorn had faded from your tongue that night.

Norman Bates was the epitome of sex and death. He *was* sex and death. This prude, virgin man burrowed deeper into our psychosis more than any overt demon of the night had done preciously. Where *Dracula* had penetrated his nubile victims, Norman Bates went one giant step further. He killed his mother so he could become her. He created a half Norman/half Mother creature. Both afraid and disgusted by sex in equal measure. The creepy motel owner lusted after beautiful women and hated them. His desires repulsed both him and the mother who watched from a silhouetted window and his own fragmented mind. The only course of action was to kill them.

Sex is creation, death is destruction. In Norman Bates's case it is both, neither with a defined line of separation. In the Italian movement of *Giallo*, that took its cue directly from '*Psycho*', things got a little more blurred. Sex and death represented beauty. If art is destruction as well as creation *Giallo* films could be called masterpieces. The films of Mario Bava, Sergio Martino and the Italian movement's most famous son, Dario Argento, looked at murder as creation, as painting and ballet, (just look at 2010's '*Black Swan*' to see the influences). Though a lot of these films are highly criticised today, and rightly so for a large number of them were pretentious or plodding, they gave birth to something that would change horror cinema forever.

Slasher films were Norman Bates mainlining cocaine straight to the brain. A fresh young director called Wes Craven took *Giallo*, Hitchcock, nuclear paranoia and rolled them up into a great ball of outrageous cinema. His debut film, '*The Last House on the Left*' is often said to be the first true slasher. It's widely known for echoing Bergman's 1960 brutal film, '*The Virgin Spring*' starring horror stalwart Max von Sydow. Where films like Argento's 1970 film, '*Bird with the Crystal Plumage*' looks at murder as social problem curable by precise investigation, '*The Last House on the Left*' shows it for all its grainy brutality. Craven's debut was released in the same year as the best example of *Giallo*. Fulci's 1972 masterpiece, '*Don't Torture a Duckling*' dealt death and sex as serious themes, setting the template for future *Giallo*, though not exceeded it.

It wasn't long before the mystery thriller elements of *Giallo* and the nightmarish realism of Wes Craven were picked up and twisted. Horror is like Frankenstein's monster at the lake edge with the little girl; it takes the pure and squeezes the life out of it until it flails into a lifeless body.

The slasher genre had some great films. I defy anybody to not be even a little disturbed watching the original '*Friday the 13th*' or '*Halloween*', not to mention Wes Craven's other great gift to the genre to that point, '*Nightmare on Elm Street*'. But a whole batch of Cannibal films, video nasties and anything else the video rental man had hidden in the back in VHS cases that

resembled classic Charles Dickens books was simply awful. Don't get me wrong I love those films. They have a soft spot in my heart, even the really bad ones. But the slasher genre for all its faults and all its beautiful glories gave us something unsettling. It gave us a puritanical view and a moral code that horror hadn't really seen before.

Of course we always had the 'Man versus God' or 'Man versus Nature' films. Hell, we even had Norman Bates style prudeness that sex out of marriage was punishable with death. But with the idea that the college kids smoking a bit of pot, having a few beers, or God forbid getting laid, will all end up hacked up or nailed to a cupboard door was a bit too much. It was as though they took all those puritanical anti-fun propaganda films of the 1930s and tacked them on to horror.

It took the godfather himself, Wes Craven, to shake things up yet again. Just when his greatest monster Freddie Kruger was becoming a cartoon caricature, Wes kicked horror and the slasher sub-genre he'd been so pivotal in creating into the furnace in the basement. He held up a mirror to the genre and broke the unwritten rule; he made fun of the things supposedly horrific. He not only held up that mirror, mostly and bravely at himself, he smashed the template so nobody could use it again.

While 1996's 'Scream' was another leap in horror it was still obsessed with one aspect of the very origins. It had sexy young women in almost every scene. This was horror for boys to drool over, while their girlfriends gripped their shoulders as Ghost Face leapt from hidden places. Sadly, as the 'Scream' franchise and its little sister 'I Know What You Did Last Summer' series fell into the same state as 'Nightmare on Elm Street' and all the other slasher overloads, soft core, soft focus sexualisation seems to be its greatest legacy.

In films like the 'Final Destination' series to 'Piranha 3DD' it's all about the babes and less about the blood. If you look hard enough you'll find clever films with great scares, terrifying monsters and more than a splattering of sex either viscerally or psychologically. 'Hellraiser', 'Silence of the Lambs', 'The Exorcist', 'The Evil Dead', 'Videodrome', Polanski's 'Apartment Trilogy', 'Martin', 'The Devils', Alien (the whole film is about sex, birth and death), and David Cronenberg's entire back catalogue up to 2002's 'Spiders' and so many more.

These days you'll find little thread between sex and death at the cinema. Now and again a film will pop up that reminds you of Giallo, 2009's 'Amer' for example. You'll stumble on a sexy vampire flick, 2011's 'We Are the Night' and 2012's 'The Moth Diaries' are two great examples. Slashers however have become teenage cartoons, yet I still hold out hope for an original take on the much maligned subgenre.

So sex and death is the same thing in horror it seems. Or different parts of the same beast. Much like in life I guess. The French have a beautiful phrase, *La petite mort*, or The Little Death. It's a metaphor for an orgasm. So you see, with sex we will always envisage the shadow of death. And for me at least, that's what gives horror its real beauty.



THE ART OF CHAOS

Ramon Llansola

Self-taught and without any kind of formal training, Ramon works on the fringe of the art business. His work is done to the sounds of rock and electronic music. Dreams and nightmares inspire his work, He admires great artists such as Goya, the underground comic scene and dark gothic music.

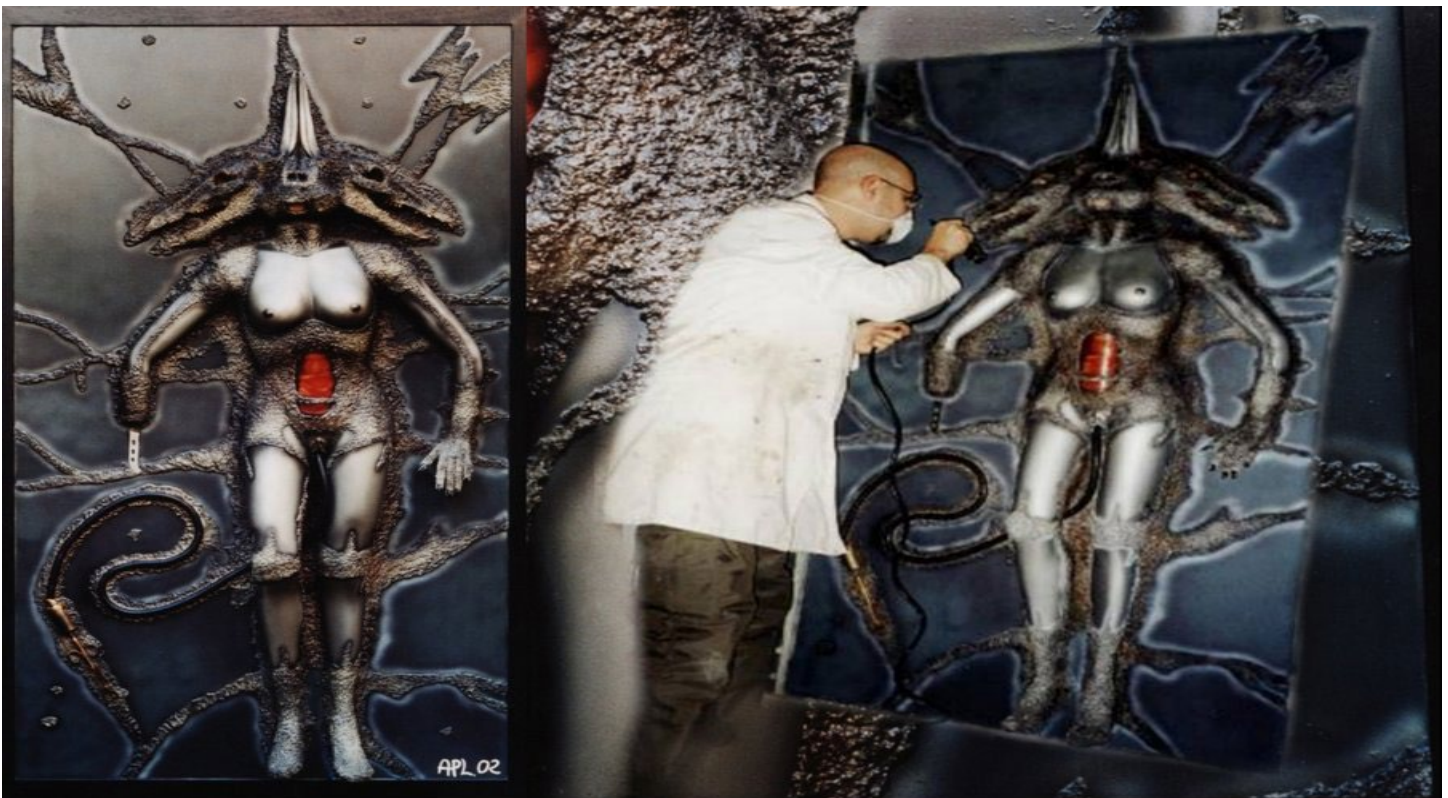
The materials used are everything from recycled products, scrap metal, bones and skulls of animals. His pieces contain everything from the skull of a pig, sheep skull, horse skull, chicken legs and a wild boar. His technique is based on experience with resins, sand and metallic chip. The airbrush is one of his favorite tools, showing the passage of time as the aging of the motives, the dirt and oxide. He has worked with many projects for rock groups, inspired tattoos, had his work used in videos and films. His work is done with the support of CAOS PRODUCTIONS, who work with the digital media world and multimedia projects.

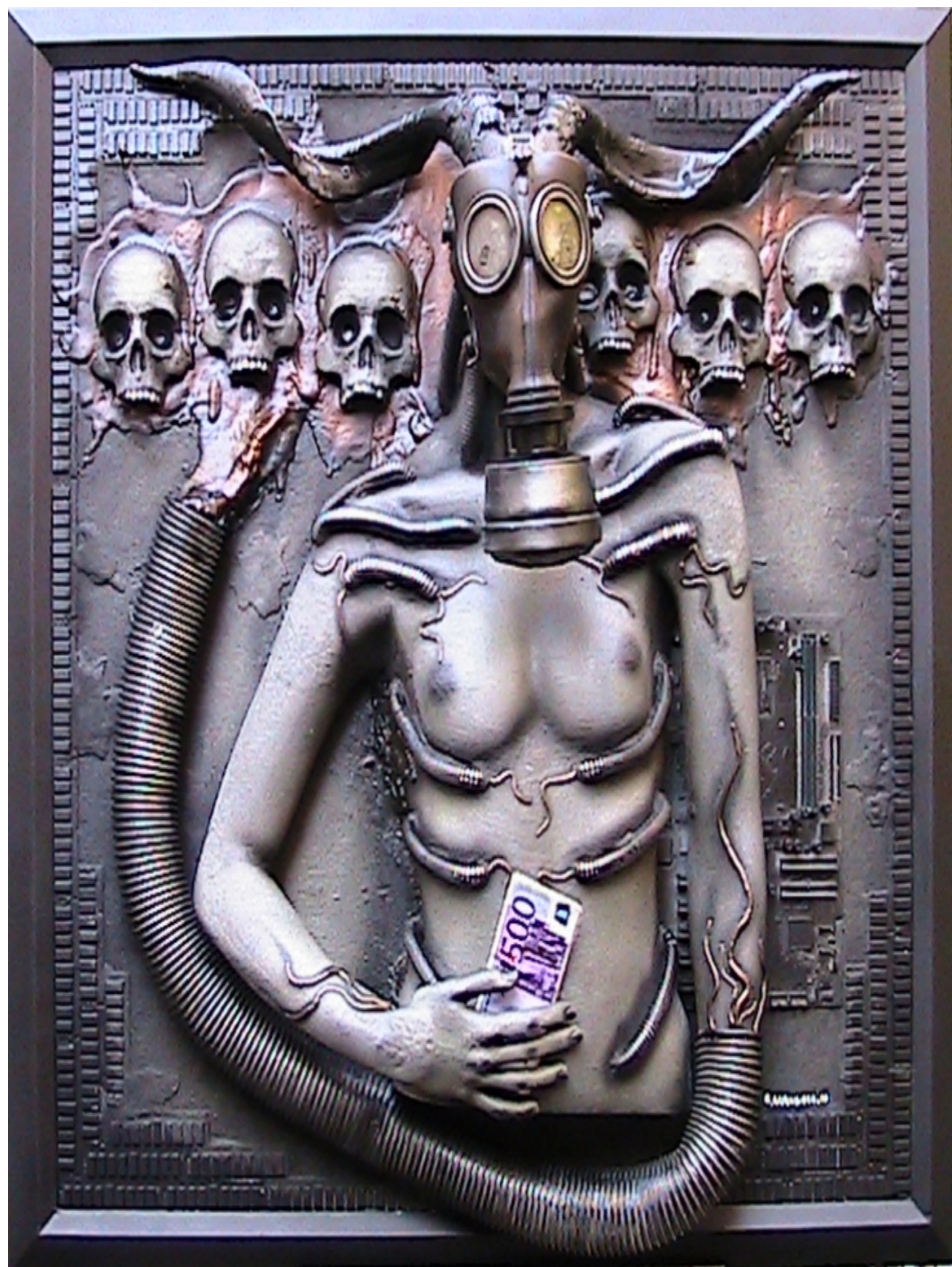
Ramon Llansola survives through art as he remains connected to the political-social changes that are sweeping the planet which is reflected through his art, their creation and his obsessions.

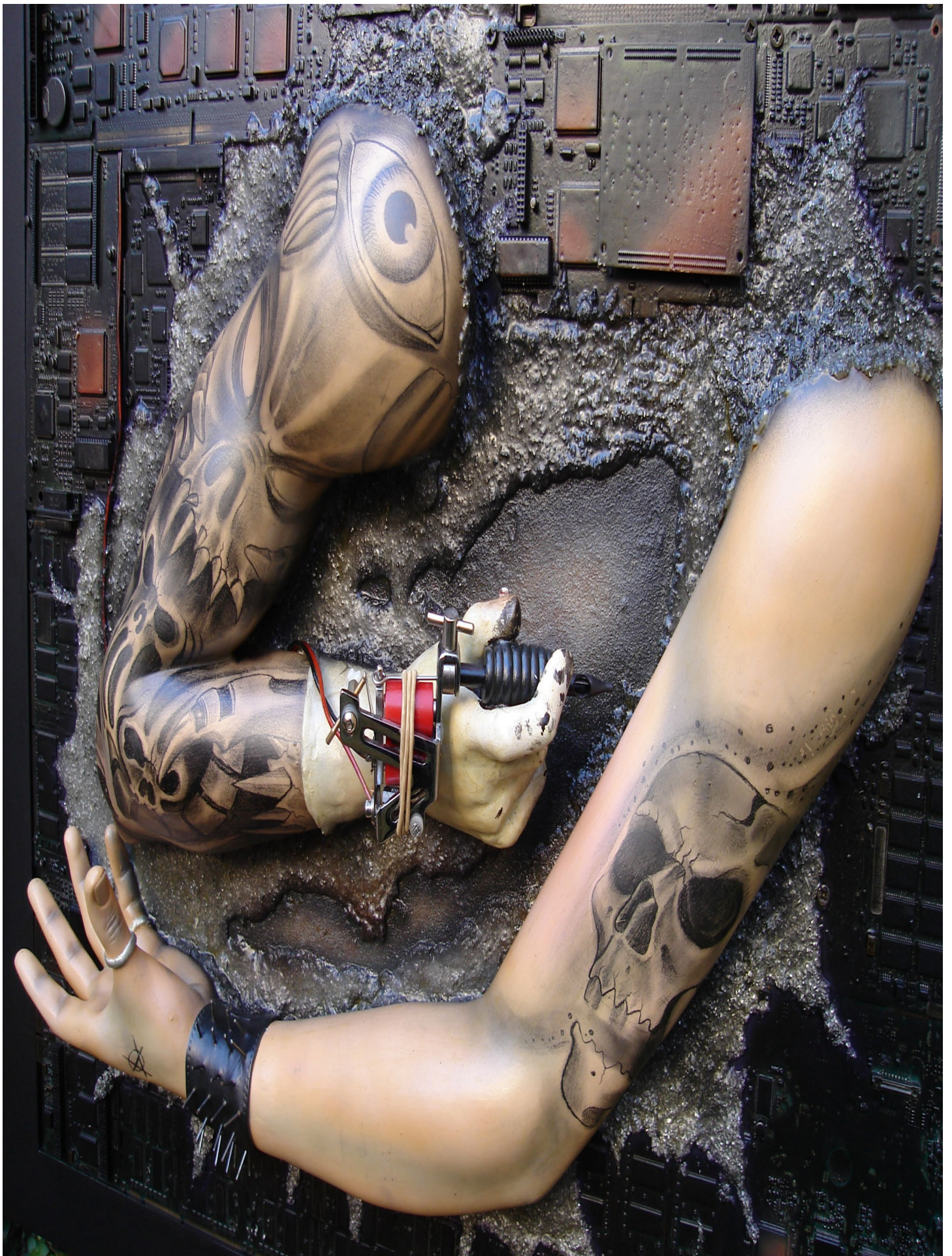
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DROWNED IN GIRL

Jamie Greffe

Flies swarm into open lips to stuff mouth with pollen. The pollen-flies bustle and buzz, nibble and twitch. They lick gums, scour teeth for cracks to fill.

Splattered girl scoops splattered hand into the moat. She sits on the mucky edge, hollowed skull wind-swimming and readies for the slime girl to come. Her fly drenched mouth mumbles a plea to the moat, to the wind, to the slime.

Her prayers rise. She pounds splattered fist in the moat. A churning. A groan from the deep. The muck turns thick, bubbles up, smokes and smothers the entire moat in its seeping flood of slime. The slime girl rises. She is the one sought and shunned, the enfleshed center and spirit of girl. She bows to the one on the edge of the moat. The splattered girl's hands steam waves of pollen from the force of her pounds and her mutters. Her eyes leak pollen. It streams from her pores. There are flies swarming the air, flies that swim in her mouth, and they flutter forth to drink of the girl's slime.

Slime girl opens mouth, and into mouth sucks the splattered wind. The flies carry her. She floats atop the muck, dripping slime in her wake. She extends her arms. They embrace at the edge of the moat, chest to chest, their fusion a melding of girl to girl. They hug tight, blanketed by flies, drenched and sticky with splatter and slime.

The pasture severs around them, opens and sucks at the flood. Clouds fester like flies. The heavy air. The wind. And, the rip of the grass is torn by the force of their bond.

The splattered girl, embraced, shuts eyes and the slime girl shuts eyes, and lip to lip they spew into each other a loving wave of pollen. It meets in their locked mouths. The girls will not be moved by the gathering wind. The girls will not be moved by the rumbling clouds.

The girls moan and push the stream of pollen further down their throats, until the pollen swirls inside on their tongues into one heart of splattered slime pumping pollen. The tremulous gush of love and heat from the flow of pollen melts their gums, fills into veins, and blends them into one. The force is the force of girl. They are

swelling. They are ready to burst.

The pollen explodes their flesh to bits. Limbs struggle to keep the current afloat in a wave of splattered slime, but the melding of spatter and slime into pollen is a whirlwind within them.

And bits of their bodies sink in the flood.

And pollen seeps in the soil.

Flies swoop down to nibble the scattered flesh and lick at the puddles of hot pollen. The flies carry slime and splatter-drenched limbs and scraps of wet bone up into the sky, until they, too, burst in the clouds and their pollen rains down on the battered grass of the ravaged pasture.

In the calm muck, the world breathes the warm flow of their wet remains.





thenewestredranger.deviantart.com



8-bit Apocalypse: The Gamer's Corner CATHERINE-A REVIEW BY COURTNEY ALSOP

"Love is temporary insanity curable by marriage."- Ambrose Bierce



The game *Catherine* is a weird mix in the world of video games, especially by Western standards. It is a psychological horror adventure, and its action comes in the form of a puzzle-platformer. Young men have been dying in their sleep with twisted looks of pain on their faces. There is a rumour that unfaithful partners are cursed, and that there is a witch among them who is behind it. Cue Vincent, the protagonist, who is coasting through life with no ambition to change and move forward with his life. His girlfriend, Katherine, is pressuring him to marry her. One night when he is at the Stray Sheep bar, Catherine comes along. After a long night of drinking with her, he wakes up in his apartment. With a naked Catherine beside him. He cannot remember exactly what happened, but it's apparent that they had sex. Now a despicable cheater, he has to decide which direction to take. He and Katherine have a history and she is maternal and nurturing, but also cold and controlling. Catherine is new, vivacious, and

seductive, yet he knows very little about her and she tends to be a little bit on the psychopathic side. Vincent does not appreciate the pressure that this has put on him.

At night he dreams that he has to climb a tower that falls underneath him. To climb the tower he must pull, push, and arrange blocks and avoid traps. There are others with him, but they are all bipedal sheep, and they see him as the same. Those who cannot climb the tower die in real-life. But why have they been summoned to the tower? In the tower there are landings of safety with a confessional booth where Vincent is asked some personal questions by the Mysterious Voice, including, "Does life begin or end at marriage?" and "Are you a pervert?" It is the player that must answer them and the answers impact the game. The other things that you do in the game include texting Katherine and Catherine, drink, talk to bar patrons, and play an arcade game called Rapunzel (that is similar in game play to the game proper).

The game is certainly not for children or sensitive minds. Overall, it is a game that has a unique premise. It has been criticized for its difficulty during the tower climbing, but with an array of difficulty settings even a newbie gamer can complete the game for the story. This game was made by the same team who made *Persona 4*, and just like *Persona 4*, *Catherine* is full of hilarity, quirkiness, and sports a twisted and macabre plot. As long as you do not require action during every moment of your gaming experience, I highly recommend this game.



<http://50lbhead.deviantart.com/>

Into Hell

M. Allen

Adam could feel the old man staring through him, with one milky white eye that screamed a thousand warnings and one vibrant green that promised treasures untold. They both knew that Adam couldn't turn back, not after the long weeks of desperate searching that had alienated his friends and ruined his savings, but the offer was a ritual that the old man was bound to.

"It gets dangerous from here, lad. I'll understand if you've had your fill."

Adam didn't bother to reply, the old man was already opening the gate anyway. He was still a little surprised by how plain it was, but he didn't dare question the old man's guidance - not on these matters, for certainly nothing was quite as it seemed since he left York. Yet here, in an unremarkable English hamlet, to the side of a cottage no more impressive than the last, Adam stood before the gateway to Hell.

"What better place for evil to reside than the tranquil hearth of man?" the old man had chuckled to himself. It sounded like a touch of eloquence borrowed from somewhere but Adam couldn't recall its origin. He did wonder if the rattled mind knew what 'hearth' actually meant.

Pushing these distractions aside Adam summoned his courage and stepped past the rusted gate and into the unknown. Just beyond he stopped and stood still. A hot black mist began swirling from all around, obscuring his sight and filling his lungs with sulphur. As the mist cleared, leaving just a searing breath behind, Adam was looking out into Hell - or at least his own perception of it - a desolate cavern brimming with shadows of the dead.

Over the grim and sodden earth Adam trudged, with the old man just ahead guiding him through the sea of lost souls. It was as if they were woven from a spider's web, so weak and lifeless, parting without resistance as the old man waded through; leaving Adam free to travel in his wake.

"If we're lucky, we'll survive long enough to return and join them," he cackled.

It was not presumption but fact: everyone winds up in Hell. Either that or Hades, the Abyss, or whatever the unfortunate corpse chooses to call it. In Adam's eyes it was a scorched cavern infested with an immeasurable throng of carcasses, each patiently waiting to be plucked from the crowd and chained to the ceiling. Hanging limp like forgotten puppets they were then flogged to whiteness, each lashing stripping away a part of their very being. Slowly, and it would seem to last decades for each and every one of them, every scrap of individuality would be removed. Because that is the purpose of Hell: to redeem man of his crime of living. To exist is to cultivate a sense of self, and to do that is to stray from perfection. Ultimately, when all aspects of life have been removed, a perfect husk walks free to return to the existence from which it once fell.

"How will we find her?" asked Adam, suddenly conscious of the ever expanding scene of debauchery that he was beneath.

“You have your ring, do you not? Do tell me that your marriage was important enough to bring with you to this place.”

Adam looked and saw that his wedding band was still secure, and even glimmering somewhat despite the cruel light that cast shadows in every direction. He recalled his wedding day. It was a little more extravagant than was necessary, and with plenty of relatives that he would have rather not seen (especially the old crones possessed with ambition to drink the bar dry), but at the centre of it all was Jennifer: something perfect that couldn't have been marred under any circumstance. Fondly he remembered the first dance, when everything else seemed to fade away, leaving just the two of them holding each other tight. That was when he realised that they had grown so close that he was as much a reflection of her as he was his own person.

Adam's heart yearned; he missed her sorely.

The old man grinned, and with the mismatched eyes Adam could not tell if he was being sincere or sinister (or both). “Well,” he said quietly, “let's see if she felt the same way.”

Like a darting serpent the old man had grabbed Adam's forearm and wrenched it into the sky. A light like a strand of silver hair stretched from his ring into the distance towards one of the wretched souls chained to the cavern ceiling. Was he too late? How much of Jennifer had already been stripped away?

Abandoning the old man Adam ran as fast as he could towards his wife, crashing through the sea of souls that now refused to move aside. For a moment Adam felt uneasy as he began to realise that he was running physically through the dying essence of these people, but that unease was soon ignored in favour of rescuing Jennifer. When he was close enough to see her, confirming with his eyes that the woman he loved was here and still connected to him, he searched for a way to reach the ceiling.

Nearby there was column, formed from the dripping blood of the tortured as it deposited minerals over the millennia, stalagmite and stalactite reaching towards each other until finally connecting. Adam leapt and clung to it with bare fingers, tearing skin and nail as he struggled upwards. Climbing, he remembered Jennifer when she was alive. Her face shone with joy, round and full in the cheeks, smiling with the world. Her figure was curved, voluptuous even (though he would have avoided saying so within earshot, in case she found reason to be offended), and brimming with love and energy which she gave freely. Only with her image could Adam bear the pain, gritting his teeth as his shoulders and arms screamed white fire in rebellion.

Adam dared to look up at her again, seeing little but skin and bones, her hair limp and her flesh torn by the lash. At this sight a small part of him thought it best to give up, and losing to it for a moment he began to slip, but with effort he threw himself back into the column, digging his bleeding fingers into the macabre rock and reaching higher. He had walked *into* Hell for his wife and he wasn't going to walk *out* of Hell without her. Not if there was any chance that he could claw her back into his life.

From anguish, the pain in his shoulders subsided to a dull ache, his body giving in to his will and deciding to go along with it all without a fight. But there was still considerable damage to struggle through and it was a herculean effort to bring his arms above his head. Slowly, Adam moved from column to the cavern ceiling, digging his toes into any crevice he could reach so he could take some of the weight off his arms, breaking most of them as he worked his way towards Jennifer. Never mind, toes heal, failure would not.

The demon tearing Jennifer apart with its heavy sinew lash noticed him and stopped mid-strike, looking at him curiously for a moment with glazed eyes before leaving to find another deserving creature to deal with. It was not the demon's job to deal with him; it had no power over someone who came to Hell willingly - or at least Adam assumed this to be the case.

Recognition and hope spread across Jennifer's face as Adam reached her, dispelling all doubt in his mind that too much of her had already been lost to the ether. Relief poured through him, and for a second it overwhelmed the aching pain as he began to truly believe that he would succeed. The pain seeped back into his bones, but the respite was enough for him to gather his mind and tackle the challenge afresh. His body was a tool, worn and dented through its recent use but still capable of the job if he was willing to force it. Adam grasped the chains, braced himself against the ceiling, and pulled, hearing his bones creak and splinter as he drove with all his worth. It was just enough - love *would* prevail - and the chains finally came away throwing Adam and Jennifer to the floor in a tangled heap.

Perhaps he had been lying there for minutes, maybe days, or even years, but when Adam came to the cavern was gone. No rocks or blood or screams, no demons, no lost souls. Just Adam and his wife in a bleak and infinite melancholy.

"And just how were you planning to get out, my lad?"

Adam spun round to face the old man, still hunched over and grinning as if stepping out of thin air was entirely natural.

"That's the beauty of perceptions," he said as a slow breeze seemed to scatter him like mist back into the nothingness, "They're so easy to alter."

And then he was gone. Adam had only his wife, her battered body unable to support its own weight, and his determination. With Jennifer's arm around his shoulders they began to walk.

Decades slipped away but the scenery did not change. Just two nameless creatures walking onwards, always in the same direction but never any closer to their goal. Just once the man stopped and looked at his hands. They were bare, but he couldn't remember why that seemed unusual. Had they once contained something important? And if they had was it something he'd given up willingly or had it been taken from him? He was unsettled for a while, trying to recall what had happened by the fragments he could still remember, but eventually he realised that those memories were forever gone and all he had left was the walk.

The bleak canvas held its ground, unwavering despite the determination of one man slowly losing everything else that might occupy him. The man lost all memory of where he was or what he was doing, all he knew was the endless walk. His former life slipped away, and with it all traces of his individuality. He forgot about the person he had been walking with, and in that moment she turned to dust, drifting away as if she was never there to begin with.

At the end of the journey there stood only a perfect husk, ready to be accepted back into His graces. The transformation was complete.

Everyone comes to Hell with a purpose in mind, but nobody leaves with either.



My Dear Master

Rory Fleming

Dennis was in the kitchen, boiling water. It didn't smell like his food, didn't smell like mine either. I lifted myself from my hindquarters and forced myself out of the flat into the garden. The doggie door was waiting for me. I jumped on through and just my luck, it was raining really hard outside and my black fur started absorbing the water. My ears got soggy. Now, I couldn't hear anything from the inside. The boiling water was replaced by the sound of natural pitter-patter and nothing more.

I knew what was happening. Billy (I picked up the name when they were chatting drunkenly in each other's arms) had to go to work the next morning. Dennis couldn't admit it was a job for him, because it wasn't a job for Dennis. It was real life. So when Billy started getting dressed in public clothes, ones that covered up a bit more than his just his junk, Dennis's hands began to tremble, the veins started bulging in his scrawny neck, and he felt a rush of inexplicable anger over the fact the world wouldn't stop when he wanted it to. He wanted this moment to last forever. You know how couples will romantically say that to each other? Dennis didn't have anyone like that, but at least he could pretend.

But bodies don't last forever either. First, they stop their post-mortem jerking around, and then they start to stink. Eventually they are reduced to angry, tough meat. When something stresses before it dies, it tends to tighten the muscles, making them difficult to eat. Not that he wanted to, anyway. He ideally wanted to sit Billy on his couch, pour some morning tea for him for the next couple of weeks like he was a beloved old flame visiting from another town over. Both he and I knew that wasn't going to happen. Killing for company was always going to fail.

Last time he did this he turned to me and said "You're the only one who understands me." I actually don't, really – I have just been around long enough to know things. And if he was that close to me, he wouldn't need to seek out others. He's not interested in animals. He wants someone he can talk to. However, you can't

talk to a body.

The rain started letting up. I shook my soaked fur and shook the musings from my mind. Whether I liked it or not I was stuck with it—it was either this or the pound. I could run away but they would probably put me down. Dennis wasn't going to put me down, so I felt safe with him. And he knew I wasn't going to run away either. If I did, he would kill me. Maybe I understand him after all, which is why I am safe. That and the fact that I'm a dog named Bleep.

When I was as dry as I was going to get, I went back inside. Dennis was blubbering over the boiling pot. His glasses were crooked and falling off and his face was all red and flushed. He looked terrible. I wished there was something I could really do, to siphon this pain out of his body, into the ground maybe where he started planting parts of the bodies. The dead could take his pain. But every time that happened the pain multiplied within him instead of leaving. Once you kill one man, there's no way out. Dennis is trapped now. Trapped like the bodies he created. Trapped in that ground.

Dennis turned to me, made believe he wasn't upset, said "Hey buddy, hey girl, come over to daddy." I trotted over and he rubbed me then clenched me tight. I felt his salty tears on my face. He missed Billy. It made me wish I was a man for him. A human man. I would never leave, and he would never be in this mess. We would be happy and trapped together. That's what he would have wanted.

Dennis Nilsen. My owner. My dear master.





SHAUNA

Bud R. Berkich

Greencastle. A motel. Walking. Two people: a man and a girl. Man, middle-aged, German-looking, short. Girl-- young, ripe, sexy. Dangerous curves. (You figure it out.) Make-up heavy, bright. Tight, clingy top (cleavage, nipples)-- midriff bared (pierced, small chain hanging down), black leather jeans (tight, shiny), platforms. Wait. Yes? Where can I get cold cuts? Excuse me? Cold cuts, for lunch. Oh. Deli on corner. Thanks. Do you live here? Wha--? Do you live at the motel? I'm staying here. (I live here.) My name is Stryker. Reverend Jacob Stryker IV. My daughter, Shauna. Hi. Hi. Please excuse her, sir. Why? Because she's too worldly. Huh? Dad! For Christ's sake. Don't you take the name of the Lord in vain, young lady. You see, her style of dress and mouth betray her.

I think she looks nice. Devil's attire. Nah. Devil doesn't have the body for it. Tail and hooves get in the way. Shauna laughs. I grin. Stryker-- no laugh, no grin. Thank you. See that? Someone likes me. A faint grin on his part, silence. What is your name, sir? Bill. Are you a Christian, Bill? Excuse me? Are you a-- I believe so. Are you saved, Bill? I believe so. Are you a churchgoer, Bill? Sometimes. What denomination, Bill? None in particular. I'm Pentecostal Holiness, myself. Fourth generation. Great-grandfather got saved at Azusa Street. Evidence of the tongues. Really? Azusa Street? I'm covering for a pastor on vacation over at the Holiness church in town. If she's going to be there-- a nod-- yes. Yeah, sure. Great. Love to have you. I lead a Spirit-filled service. You'll be nourished. Uh, huh. Offers his hand. Reluctantly accept. Sweaty palms.

Later. Second floor. Outside my room-- Shauna. Sitting. Reading. Hi. Hi. What are you reading? Of Human Bondage. Maugham? Yes. Great book. Yes, story of my life. What? How so? Sad tale. In bondage to Reverend Father. Beatings. Runaway. Caught. More beatings. Affidavit. Signed by local judge (down deep South, small town, no checks and balances). Can't leave home until twenty-one or becomes ward of the state. Any state. Rape? Incest? Maybe, implied. Him to her, not her to him. How old are you? Nineteen. Mother? Dead. Killed in car accident when I was twelve. Where is he now? Where else? In church. Are you a Christian? What is a Christian? As much as the next, I suppose. Believe in Christ, just not my father's. Reverend Stryker? Reverend asshole.

Church. Ten minutes to seven. Long line of the body of Christ lined up at the door. Stryker there to greet them. Shauna nowhere to be seen. Damn. Couple in front of me greeted and blessed. I'm next. Bob, welcome. So glad you could join us. It's Bill. Huh? Bill. The name's-- Oh, yes, Bill. I forgot. Forgive a fellow brother in Christ. Besides, there are no names with the Lord, just brother and sister, right? The Lord knows my name. I break free of his grip (he loosened up considerably on that note). Same sweaty palms. I go in.

Pandemonium. The body of Christ in seizure. Shouting, stomping, clapping, amens and hallelujah, brother! all around. Four man band on stage rocking hard for Jesus. I plow through the wheat, spot Shauna at a back pew on the end. Almost on the floor. Avoided like a leper-- body too sexy for the body. Clothes same style as yesterday, but more slight; skin-tighter, brighter. Face like a clown. Tammy Fae. Love the look (always liked clowns). Hey. Hey. So you came. Of course. I always come. Welcome to the circus. Thanks. Like your outfit. Thanks. No one else does. I laugh. What does your father think? He thinks I'm a slut.

Cheer goes up. Someone running down center aisle. Slapping parts of the body high five. Band plays an introduction. Sounds like Aqualung. Person running is Stryker. Yes, running. Amens, hallelujahs at the front of the altar. Can I get a witness? I said, can I get a witness? Mouth of the body flies open. Stryker sits down at piano in corner, starts to play. Jerry Lee Lewis great spirit filled balls of fire. Pillar of Fire. Starts to sing. Three minutes

of rock on, brother! Body in ecstasy-- girl removes top-- no bra (pierced nipples?!) In the spirit? Shauna replies with a loud Wooo! Take it off, baby! Gets dirty looks (from the body and the girl, girl's looks are a different kind of dirty). Gets look from Stryker. A grin. Guys in the side aisles with blankets blanket the topless saint. Who are they? Slayer Acolytes. They rock. Several more females (no men-- spirit must affect only the female of the species) spirit slain slain by the slayers. Black Sabbath concert, or church service? Jesus Christ. Shauna grins. You won't find Him here. Spiritual homicide over. Show's over. Time to go to work. Work? Can I get a ride?

So I rode her. The Pleasure Dome. Nude bar. Place of employment. In Xanadu did Kubla Kahn-- Chambersburg. Dancing queen, undressed to kill. Me, over-dressed. Hot under the collar, hotter than hell under the waistband. Table dance, lap dance; dance, dance, dance. Nude pool (her, not me). Nice contrast. We burn the midnight oil. We burn. Burn. Burn. Inferno. Circa eleven-thirty, two girls show up. Look familiar. Christ. The topless Christians of the First Holiness Church. Slain, now resurrected. New life? Greet Shauna with an unholy kiss-- Madonna and Britney. Introduce me. We talk. Fucked your dad in church. Fuck him. Have to go. Due on stage. So. Stryker spiritual pimp on side. Terrific. Night goes on. Can't look Shauna in the face, rest of body gets in the way. Shauna tries to look me in the face. Can't. Look gets stuck in my zipper. I get off at two. Would you like to get me off again at two-thirty? What did you have in mind?

Motel. Small. Seedy. Outskirts of town. Night manager could care less. Not. Twenty-five dollars a night. Single bed. Have a good one. Thanks, we will. Night manager knows someone we know. Unbeknownst to us. Everyone knows. Night manager concerned Christian. Phone call. Someone who cares? Could care even less. Room. Opening statements. Feeling out process.

Creative girl-- will be an artist when she grows up. Much too creative for daughter of a preacher man. But considering what man... definitely the mind of a preacher man's dancing daughter. Practice Roethke's Turn and Counter-turn, then Turn, Turn, Turn around and Turn around again. An hour of this. Dizziness. Phone rings. Phone rings? Hello, Shauna can't come to the phone right now, she's all tied up at the moment. Click. Laughter. Half hour. Hard knock on the door. Who the-- answer-- Shauna, open up this God damned fuckin' door. Shit. Thud. Door splinters at lock. Go away you sonofabitch. Curved blades on chain. Snap. Door flies open. Everyone's favorite neighbourhood charlatan. Goes for both of us. Misses. I don't. Goes flying into TV set. Stryker makes big time, now on TV. Enter Chambersburg's finest. Guns drawn. Hel-lo.

State pen. Two years. Statutory rape. Nineteen fair game? Yes. Sixteen, no. Shauna away in some God knows where. Stryker still doing the Lord's work. Then one day Shauna turns twenty-one. Released. Asswipe father welcomes prodigal daughter home with open arms. She accepts. A few days later. Beddy time. Stryker sleeping like a baby. Shauna not. Fishnet body suit-- no bra, no panties. Five inch platforms. Walk. To the church. Late night prayer time? Not. God's not there. (At home, asleep.) Shauna has the keys to the kingdom. What to do first? Always wanted to dance nude in my father's church-- everyone else does. Always wanted to piss and shit on altar-- enough crap is produced from here every Sunday anyway. Always wanted to purify this hellhole--baptism by fire. Always wanted to smoke where I'm not allowed. Strike match, lite it up. Phosphate. Hot shit. Fire and brimstone. Up in a flash. Burn, baby, burn-- Dante's Inferno. To hell with you and dad. Let's make dad into a girl-- castrate his hard-on. It's getting a little hot in here.

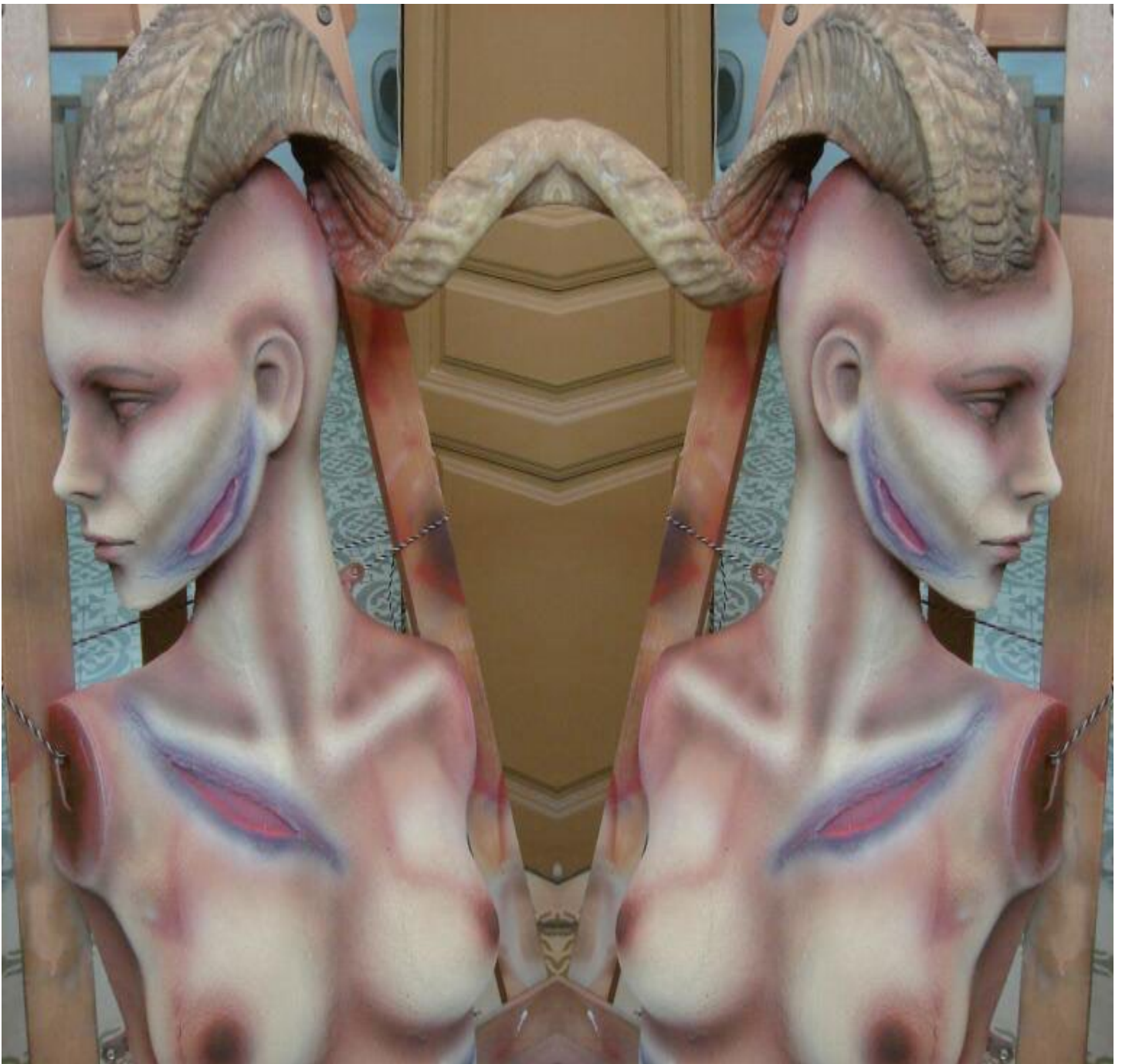
Hill in the distance. Good place to watch. Total engulfment. Makes me horny. Sirens-- make me even hornier. Got to get off-- make this cat suit crotchless-- aah, that's better. Easy access. Nero's not the only one who plays a mean fiddle... I'm soaked-- good thing I shaved today. Aaaaaah, aaaaa-- who's that? Dad! I knew you would come (I knew I would come, too. Ha!) Make me cum again, dad-- scream a little louder, dad-- it fuckin' turns me on. Yes! Yes! Aah! Aah! Aaaaaaaaaaah! I'm coming! I'm coming! Fuck yes! That one was for you, dad. Whew! That hit the G-spot. I'm exhausted. All this heat. I'm covered in sweat (among other things)-- like how my body glistens, dad? Like the way the flames are reflected off of it? Pretty sexy, huh? Are you exhausted yet? Good. Well, got to go now-- you can clean up the mess.

Walking. If they catch me, God made me do it. Who knows? Maybe He'll make me do it again. Goodbye, church. Goodbye, Holiness. Goodbye, Father.

Hel-lo, Shauna.

BIOGRAPHY

Bud R. Berkich was born in Somerville, NJ and raised in Bound Brook, NJ. He currently resides in Manville, NJ. Bud has been writing creatively since the age of eight, and has had poetry, short stories and plays published at The Idiom, The Rockhurst Review, Subliminal Interiors, Quantum Poetry Magazine, The Analectic, Literary Juice, Bareback, Randomly Accessed Poetics and Downer Magazine. He is the co-founder and director of The Somerset Poetry Group in Bridgewater, NJ.

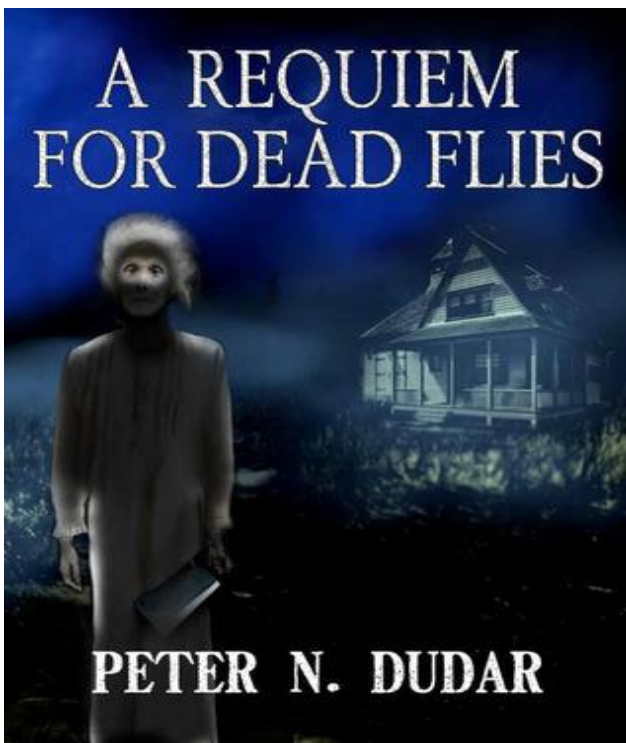




A REQUIEM FOR DEAD FLIES BOOK REVIEW BY BRITTANY WARREN

While reading *A Requiem for Dead Flies*, I was compelled to do so with a can of Raid at hand to forgivingly rid the plot of all the flies that made themselves at home here; simply because bugs can be the worst of pests, and I was afraid that they would get in the way of the plot. However, they were a necessity and very well incorporated in the book.

The one thing about this novel that had a tendency to bother me was the protagonist, Lester MacAuley's



manner of dialogue. In the novel he is stated to be an English Teacher, yet he tosses slang words such as “ain’t” around as if he didn’t make it past the fifth grade.

In this spotlight novel, we are shown the life of our protagonist as the tenses switch between past (Lester at age thirteen) and present day, where he resides at Olympia Gardens Psychiatric Hospital and relays the plot to his doctor. He describes in full detail the demons within his family, and the dark secrets which plague him.

Lester learned much about his Grandmother Vivian during his stay at her home on Battle View Farm with his brother Gordon when he was thirteen, and unearthed many more logically exciting and pulse-pounding secrets during their return years later on their mission to breathe new life into the farm after their grandmother's death.

This book is definitely ideal for anyone looking

for a certain “high creepiness factor.” There was one point in particular where I had to put the book down because a certain description was just too vivid, but in the best way possible. Without these horrific points, the book wouldn’t have had such a masterful power over me as a reader.

The character struggles made the book much more enjoyable. The book is written in such a way that one is made to believe that they know a character, when they’ll later figure out that the character storylines actually go a lot deeper.

A Requiem for Dead Flies was an absolute pleasure to read, and I often found myself glued to each page, eager to see what would happen next. It is clear that Mr. Dudar has a great handle on the written word, and he proves this well throughout his debut novel.



THE HOOK UP

DOUGLAS KRING

His fingers were sweaty with spit and sweat.

Several hours had gone by at the computer and there were various pop up ads all over the screen of men sucking and fucking one another in various positions. There were close-ups of anal penetration and anorexic male models on stained bed sheets waiting for you to command them to do things. The titles of the ads screamed temptation: SARGEANT COCK RIDES AGAIN! WATCH COACH FUCK HIS TEEN TRACK STARS! STRAIGHT DUDES TRICKED INTO GAY SEX! WATCH JOHNNY DEPTH DEEPTHROAT ANOTHER NINE INCHES AND THEN TAKE IT IN THE ASS!

Malcolm had a few hours before his wife would be home. He tried to arrange a hook up. He visited the usual haunts: Craigslist, Grindr, Men4MenNow and scrolled through pages upon pages of ads. He tried to decipher between the fake pictures to bots and those who were way too hot for him or were undercover prostitutes. He knew he wasn't completely unattractive but fifteen years of marriage, a desk job had left him pudgy, balding and less than muscular. He had a slight beer belly and was nearing the big 4-0.

He knew he loved his family and his wife but this was a part of him that had always just been there, lurking underneath the surface. His son Max was almost thirteen now and just getting interested in girls, he felt inadequate to give his son the sex talk when he was so conflicted about sexuality himself. It scared him when Max brought home his young friends, young boys with soft pink skin and gorgeous smiles. They had such lithe and slim forms, when they went in the pool and splashed around together, he would watch the water drip down their pale chests. He would find himself jerking off in the bathroom or smelling their clothes from their overnight bags.

I am not a pedophile, he told himself, I would never act on it. It's just a fantasy. The same way that other men fantasize about fucking teenage girls.

Just then an email popped up. Malcolm had put an ad up about an hour ago and had only gotten a handful of responses, mostly from other men his age or older which disgusted him. He wanted someone younger, fresher, a boy just discovering himself.

Damien was just that.

Hey Daddy—19 here—love to suck cock and be sucked. I have a nice tight asshole too, only play safe though.

Hit me up.

Malcolm clicked on the pictures that the boy had sent him. He had soft blonde hair and green eyes with rose petal lips. He had a tight swimmer's build and a red delicious dick. He looked like the boy next door, a boy from a magazine, the very picture of innocence. Malcolm felt his mouth water. The second picture the boy bent over and spread the cheeks of his ass, exposing a smooth pink hole.

Malcolm responded immediately with a picture of himself, actually it was a picture from ten years ago that he still looked halfway good in. He waited.

Ten minutes passed by in excruciating anticipation, he stroked himself starting at the boy's pictures the entire time.

Then the reply came:

I want you to fuck me, Daddy.

I want to suck on that meat stick. Can you pick me up?

The boy sent an address.

When? He wrote.

Now, the boy said and Malcolm was off.

It took him about twenty minutes to find the boy's address.

He was exactly like his picture. Malcolm grew hard almost instantly.

He unlocked the doors of the BMW with the tinted windows and let the boy in.

"Damien?" he said.

"Hey," the boy said shyly and got in.

"Are you really nineteen?" he said.

The boy was silent for a moment.

"I'm seventeen but I'll be eighteen next month. Is that okay?"

Malcolm was silent for a minute. He imagined himself in a jail cell while large black men sodomized him.

"You should go," he said and unlocked the door.

"Please," Damien pleaded, "I'm horny. I like you, Daddy."

The boy reached over and grabbed Malcolm's crotch.

Malcolm groaned.

"I want to suck it soooo bad," the boy said, "please—"

"We can't go to my place," Malcolm mumbled.

"That's fine," the boy said, "I know a place."

"Where? I don't want to do anything public."

"There is an adult bookstore over on first. They have a back entrance where the video booths are. I can suck you in there and sit on your lap."

The boy grinned at him.

Malcolm felt himself trembling in excitement and fear, "I don't know, it sounds risky."

"Please," Damien begged again, "I need it bad."

Malcolm drove to the theater, they parked in the back and Malcolm took a few deep breaths before exiting the car. The place was as the boy said it would be, quiet and dark, the back entrance went straight to the booths. Malcolm scanned for a camera but there wasn't one in sight.

The boy lead him to one of the larger ones. Horny old men stood in the shadows, peeking out of the doors of the booths or in the corners. They stared with hungry eyes at the boy and with a vicious jealousy that he found such a sweet piece of meat. It was as if the boy was a visiting prince in a leper colony of chickenhawks. He's mine, Malcolm thought, he is all mine.

Once they were in the booth which was more like a room because it was so large, Malcolm put ten dollars into the machine so it would run for awhile and turned the volume up high. Images of men fucking doggy style in an orgy appeared on screen.

The boy began unbuckling his belt furiously.

"I've been a bad boy, Daddy, you need to punish me."

Malcolm grinned and took off his belt, he told the boy to bend over the chair and exposed his bare ass. He beat at him with the belt until large welts began to appear. The channel on the TV screen began to change without notice and now two men and a woman ate out another woman's asshole on the screen.

Malcolm pulled the boy by his hair and turned him to face him. Then he threw him on the ground, took off his pants completely and shoved the entire length of his cock down the boy's throat, gagging him. Damien's eyes watered and tears spilled down his cheeks. He pulled away for a moment to gasp for air and then went back for more. On the screen now, a woman was being mounted by a dog which had an eerily human face.

Through the walls, Malcolm could hear the sounds of other men crying out and fucking up against the walls. He saw the sticky stains on the walls and the smell of old sex gone sour. Shit, blood and semen smeared on the wall near the television like an offering. By the wall Malcolm saw a hole wide enough for a cock to fit

through. A gloryhole, he thought and through the peephole he could see an eye staring at him.

Let him watch, Malcolm thought, he wishes he could have this boy cunt.

“Suck on my balls,” Malcolm told the boy who lapped at them like a dog.

On the screen, there was an image of a young girl being raped, she had to have been only nine or ten. Seven men in masks surrounded her and took turns rubbing their cocks all over her prepubescent body as she sobbed with a ball gag in her mouth. Malcolm tried to ignore the images on the screen.

“Turn around,” he whispered to the boy, “Bend over.”

Damien did as he was told.

“Spread your cheeks.”

The eye in the wall watched everything.

Malcolm took a small packet of KY out of his pocket and rubbed the lube on the boy’s puckered asshole. He started fingering him furiously and the boy made mewling noises. That was when Malcolm saw the mushrooms growing out of the walls. Tiny mushrooms amid the blood, feces and cum. The bacteria and mold must have created enough fungus to birth them, he thought. The thought disgusted him but he would not be swayed from the beauty before him. In the dark flashing light of the TV screen, the mushrooms seemed to glisten. More moaning sounds from the booth over. Malcolm took off his shirt and felt the soft skin of the boy’s body rub up against his hairy chest. He told the boy to sit and slowly slid his cock inside him. The tightness was amazing, he wrapped his arms around the boy’s chest as he sat on it and pushed himself all the way deep inside of him.

The boy cried out making soft desperate noises.

“Fuck me, Daddy, I’ve been a bad boy,” he whispered.

“Shut up, you little faggot,” he growled and fucked the boy harder. His hands reached around and clutched the boy’s tiny prick.

The eye in the wall was gone now and a tongue slid through the hole in the wall. A long pink tongue like that of an animal and licked the rim, then the outside of the bacteria filled wall. Then Malcolm saw the pulsations like small little veins weaving through the wall like it was breathing. He shut his eyes, wondering if he was hallucinating from ecstasy. The scent of the boy was on him and he lost himself in the moment. His head felt strange and heavy as if he were in a trance. The channels on the television began to change rapidly then. One moment a woman was being raped and her throat slit then another man fucked the slit in her throat—then there was a corpse being double penetrated by a group of teenagers. A woman fellated a horse cock and it squirted semen in her eyes and mouth and all over her face and lips—a white woman was beaten and gangbanged by fifty black men lined up as they took turns fucking her and cutting off pieces of her skin—Japanese girls choked on gallons of semen that were poured through a funnel and a man held a girl’s nose and kept pouring semen down the funnel, watching the girl choke to death—a group of black men raped a young white boy in jail as the guards watched and handed them nightsticks to fuck the boy with as he sobbed and begged for his mother—a woman ate shit from a man’s asshole and shared it with another girl—a group of men pissed on a teen boy who drank it up greedily, swallowing mouthfuls of piss and then drinking it from a cup—a man fucked a woman with no arms and legs, an elderly woman spread her legs and laughed toothlessly as a man fucked her with a 12 inch dildo, her sagging tits excreting blood milk.

Then images of bloody children appeared from foreign countries, soldiers killing civilians, people dying of AIDS as people laughed, a nazi concentration camp mixed with images of a game show, slaves being lynched and rap videos, a man fucking an empty eye socket and then an inhuman creatures crawling across the floor chasing a woman and then ripping off her arms and legs. Shards of glass spit out of a woman’s pussy on the screen and maggots crawled out of man’s puss wound.

Malcolm felt like he was losing his mind, he threw up and then swallowed his own vomit. The boy continued to grind on him and Malcolm did not lose his erection the entire time. That was when Malcolm noticed the symbols on the wall, written in human excrement and blood. They looked like words written in some foreign language.

The boy was whispering words now in a frenzy as the mushrooms on the wall began to move, they looked like tiny mouths begging for sustenance. The tongue in the wall began longer and longer until it was a

fleshy tendril spreading along the wall.

“What is happening?!” Malcolm screamed finally.

Then he heard his son’s voice.

“Daddy, you are hurting me!” Max wept, “Please stop!”

Malcolm saw his son’s nude body on top of him and screamed, he pushed him off and threw him to the floor.

“Why did you bring me here and rape me?” the boy said, sobbing.

“Oh god, oh god, I’m so sorry, I, I—“

He was sobbing in shame.

There was the sound of guttural laughter from the ground.

Malcolm’s head spun.

“Too much?” the voice of Damien returned but it was darker now and full of malice, “Did I take it too far?”

Malcolm looked at him, horrified, “What are you?”

The boy transformed again, the skin slowly ripping off his face and revealing something reptilian underneath.

“Just lust,” the boy-thing said, “Think of us as the living embodiment of lust and we must feed.”

That was when Malcolm realized the sounds from the other booths was not that of pleasure but of men screaming in horror. Malcolm turned to run and struggled to open the door.

“You make it so easy,” the boy spoke in two voices, “I could taste you a mile away. The despair, the passion, the lust, the desire. Pedophiles are easy. You just need it so much and you taste the best.”

“WHAT ARE YOU?” Malcolm screamed again.

“Something very old and yet ageless,” the boy said and the tendrils ripped through his skin, giving up any illusion of humanity there was left. The skin suit tore into pieces and the creature came out. Malcolm smashed through the door but the tendrils were around his legs. The creature attached itself to him, ripped at his loins and started to suck. It dug its teeth in and drank the blood. Malcolm screamed in agonizing pain. The mushrooms on the wall grew larger and fuller as if blossoming. The vines along the wall glistened with fresh blood beads as the tongue tickled them. The walls pulsated again as Malcolm realized the entire building was alive. Other young children came out of the booths, one as young as seven even. She smiled and her face split open, she started to suckle at his bleeding head. A man tried to run out of a video booth and a child-thing pulled him back inside.

Malcolm saw his cell phone buzzing on the ground by the pile of his discarded clothes. It was his wife. He could see her face on his caller ID staring at him. It was her goofy picture from their second honeymoon in Reno. She had a flower in her hair and was laughing. Her frozen grin was the last thing he saw.

“Diane—“ he whispered and more of the creatures came and dug in.



g. james wyrick photography

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Inguinal - hernia of 60 years standing
Patient is brown: Hop: W. York on exchange of
Hos? Chewing



g. james wyrick

<http://www.redbubble.com/people/gjameswyrick>

WRECKED

Robert Thomas

The air is corrosive. The sound of screeching steel and screaming glass has given way to the staccato of rainfall. The wind cries and beats me worse than I've ever paid to be beaten. The coke is the only thing keeping me conscious. Roland is the only reason I survived.

Flesh carved up by glass shrapnel, pushing bloody palms against Roland's Armani blazer, torn into red tatters. It used to be blue. The strength has left me, and my best friend's corpse crushes me. Maybe it's my nerves dying, maybe it's the blood I'm losing; he still feels hot, even as his fluids leave him, even as I push my hands against his chest and my eyes water when I'm met with no thump, thump. Thump, thump. My own heart racing from one part coke, two parts near-death adrenaline rush. Cold flesh. Blood being forced through my every vein; I discover I'm still capable of getting an erection.

My eyes shudder with little black spots that flash and collapse in on themselves like dying stars. I've pissed myself. I reach out of the darkness to claw at wet soil, to get showered by falling rain. I entrench my fingers and I pull, shoveling handfuls of fresh mud against mine and Roland's body until I've slid myself forward enough that I can push his mangled remains from mine. The world smells like November on fire.

Getting through the back passenger window isn't difficult; the glass is gone, mostly lodged in my flesh. The weight of the car bearing down has made the opening that much smaller, but I've always been on the scrawny side, so I slip through easily. Pain explodes on the tip of every nerve. The cocaine numbs it, just barely, just enough so I can keep grabbing handfuls of bloody mud to pull myself out of this twisted metal coffin. In the front seat, I can see Evelyn, but I cannot see her head.

Lying there and breathing in dirt, I'm not sure how much time passes between when I pull myself from the wreckage that was Evelyn's Lamborghini and when I actually try to get up, but I do, eventually, and my body pleads for the respite of the soft earth. A tree root like a gnarled claw reaches for me. I grab hold.

The car has become a part of the forest. If you didn't know, if you weren't there when it happened, you might have guessed the twisted metal and melted interior had grown from the same roots. Upside down, it sandwiched itself between trunk and soil at 70 miles per hour. The trail we blazed through the forest on our way downhill is paved with shattered glass and whatever was in the trunk. Evelyn's head lies mud-caked several feet away.

I take panic breaths; pushing my head up at the sky and opening my mouth, inhaling rainwater. I pat myself down, feeling over sopped clothing for anything I might still have. In my right jacket pocket, I pull out what probably used to be my cell phone. I wind my good arm back and toss the thing as hard as I can, then I wince.

Memories of the moments before the crash raid my head like mental flash bangs. The bottles of liqueur filling the back seat, Roland's cock covered in white powder. Evelyn trying to drive the car with her tits, laughing like a maniac, opening the sunroof so she could stick her head out for some air. What had even happened before that?

I gasp hard and I'm back to the here and now, my legs are trying to move me further into the woods. I don't fight it, I stumble. I grab trees for support. I leave the mangled corpses of my friends behind.

Before I leave the wreckage, I grab Evelyn's head by her blond extensions and I ball it up in my coat.



Life and Death and Laughing and Stopping;

The Full-Length Edition

Nathan Pettigrew

Against Roland's, her body was soft, and between his legs, her hand made him hard, her grip becoming too tight, and then too loose, too tight, too loose—the confusion enough to loosen even the tightest screws of a sane mind.

He flipped pulling her body under his, and inside, her warmth was deceptive: It didn't feel like an area that had ever known the presence of another man. It felt like home. Roland believed that it was okay to share his strength, pushing hard while Susanne pushed back. She didn't make a sound; she just kept on pushing.

Underneath, Susanne could go for hours without arriving. She had that endurance. That reign. She didn't get off on intimate moments. She got off on power, and she wanted Roland to concede.

So he let her on top, and there, Susanne threw her head back while thrusting forward and again. But Roland knew that he would wilt if he touched or tried to hold on to her breasts in bloom. He had to think of other things. Like work. Like electrical wires with no charge. Anything to keep from arriving too early.

Susanne made it hard, thrusting forward and again, and again, real fast like that. Moving faster.

She was the only home that Roland ever knew, and Susanne believed that no matter what she did, Roland would always come home, always living right under her thumb with nowhere else to go.

Her body gone stiff and now quivering, she had arrived. Thank God. Roland pushed faster, and faster, and since Susanne was on the pill, he joined her inside, the chill between his legs crawling up through his body, his neck and his shoulders. He shivered, and then he stopped.

Susanne crashed down next to him. "Goddamn that was good." She let out a deep sigh. "You stayed hard the whole time, too."

“Seriously? You’re rubbing that in my face after enjoying it so much?”

Her heavy breathing kept him in the moment, helping Roland to see that despite any past failures to perform, tonight he’d made Susanne happy.

“Roland,” she said in the dark.

“What?”

“There’s something... Something you should know.”

He turned his head her way. “I’m listening.”

“I’m pregnant.”

Roland’s heart didn’t sink; it sped into a free fall. “What?” He pushed the covers aside and stood on his bare feet full of blisters, the piercing burn of the pressure forcing him to grind his teeth. “You’re screwing with my head, right? How can that be? You got off your birth control?”

“No.” Susanne sat up, crossing her legs Indian-style. “I skipped a few days and that can mess up the cycle. I would’ve said something sooner, but... I didn’t want to spoil the mood. We haven’t been together in so long.” Her eyes told the truth, unblinking while glowing blue in the dark, bright and faint from certain angles.

“Jeezuz fucking God,” Roland said, looking at the floor with his forehead gripped in his palm. “This is so... This messes up everything.”

“It doesn’t have to,” Susanne said.

He met her blue stare. “What do you mean?”

“I’m not keeping it.”

In the moonlight shining through her window, Roland stood limp now and lightheaded with his heartbeat not anywhere near closer to slowing down.

“What are you telling me, Susanne? ‘Cause that’s pretty freakin’ vague.”

Susanne slid her elastic from around her bedpost before pulling her hair back into a ponytail. “I’m getting an abortion. So you don’t have anything to worry about. Okay?”

Dark silence passed between them.

“Are you gonna stand there all night? I can’t imagine that feeling too good on our feet.”

Her sheets were damp from their sweat, her headboard cold against Roland’s back when he came down to sit next to her. “They look a lot worse than they feel.”

“They look terrible,” she said. “Are you ever going to tell me what happened?”

“I told you already. Too long of a walk in the wrong boots is all,” he said. “Just... Tell me one thing, and

I want you to be honest with me, okay? Is it even mine?"

"Don't be a bastard, Roland. That's such a typical guy thing to do."

He looked away, only to face her again. "I saw you."

"Saw me what?"

"At the party the other night. I saw you."

"I..." Susanne gasped for air, nearly choking, and then slowly, she swallowed the knot in her throat.

Took a deep breath. "I don't..." She shook her head. "I don't remember much from that night."

"Wish I could say the same," Roland said, but he remembered everything. He remembered coming home and drinking himself into oblivion, where a blackout had failed to find him. Trapped in his own blackness, Roland tried to hold on to the only person he could.

But he found no comfort. He found resistance. His hands around her throat and her elbows piercing his ribs. He could still feel the bruises, sore and shortening of breath. She kicked and gagged, and Roland refused to let go. If only he had let go.

Goddamn the high that came. Goddamn the high that kept him—the rise in a rush of blood that allowed him to dominate for the first time in his life. A feeling now worth nothing.

If only he had let go, Sophia would be alive. Poor Sophia.

Roland had taken everything from an innocent who had nothing to do with Susanne. He deserved nothing.

Run all he could, but he wouldn't escape the stare of her dead eyes when he closed his own. Gray and discolored, those eyes would haunt him forever.

Used to be Susanne's blue stare that kept him up at night, and now tonight, it still did, but only in a sobering way. She was still here, still breathing the same air, her old breath too hot, offensive and onion-stale.

"So you're using again?" Roland asked.

"No. Not since that night," Susanne said. "I've... I've never been that high before. I just... I lost control."

"Is that what you call it? Losing control?"

"That's what happened."

"Don't tell me what happened. I saw what the fuck happened. The door wasn't even locked, Susanne."

"We broke up, Roland."

"No. Nothing was official the way we left things. And anyway that was what, a whole two hours before?"

If that? Forget me. How could you degrade yourself like that?"

Susanne brought the heel of her palm to wipe the tear from her eye. "Haven't you ever done anything that you have a hard time explaining?"

Roland fixed his gaze on the moon. "Actually... I have."

"Sometimes," Susanne said. "I'm at a low point where I think that maybe you *should* do something to get back at me. I know that I would deserve it."

"Believe me, I was ready to. I so wanted to. But... I'm no better than you. I mean I know that now. I have no right to judge anyone anymore."

Roland straightened his legs, too fast catching some of the bedspread with his blisters. "Goddamn."

Susanne put her hand on his forearm. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah. Just... I'm fine."

"I never meant to hurt you, Roland."

"Then why even tell me you're pregnant, Susanne? Seriously. What's the point?"

She threw her hands up. "I thought you had a right to know."

"What, and you didn't think I had a right to any final decisions?"

"It's my body."

"Yeah. Giving birth to another life. I mean, why do you have to kill it? You could give it up for adoption, you know."

"It's still considered a fetus, Roland."

"So what's that mean? You were never a fetus?"

"Okay, so what if I kept it? Are you actually ready to be a father?"

How could he be? What could he teach a child? How to be the kind of roommate that he'd been to Sophia?

"No," he said, resigned. "In fact, it's all just as well. What you're doing, I mean. 'Cause that's one of the reasons I came by tonight. I'm leaving town for a while."

"You're on vacation?"

"Leave of absence. I'm going to see my folks in Louisiana, and I'm headed out on the first flight tomorrow morning. But I'm not so sure I'm coming back."

"Why? Are you in some sort of trouble, Roland?"

"I'm just..."

A murderer.

“I’m confused right now about a lot of things, and home’s a reset button for me, you know?”

“But it’s not really your home,” she said. “You’ve spent far more of your life up here than you ever did on those bayous.”

“They wanted me to have a chance, Susanne. Nothing wrong with that.”

Dark silence returned, until Susanne itched her arm. She caught the moon trying to hide behind a cloak of black clouds, could see glimpses of white slivers. She saw that the moon could never truly hide. It would never change.

“What happened, Roland? What did you do?”

“Aside from getting you pregnant and watching you guzzle cum at the party the other night?”

“Stop it,” she said. “That’s all this is? You’re not running from something else? You said before how you had no right to judge anymore. What did you mean by that?”

“You know you sit there and accuse me of running, but here I am confronting you about the secrets you’ve been keeping from me.”

“I don’t think I’m the only one keeping secrets,” Susanne said. “But I guess the bottom line is that we don’t trust each other, do we? We haven’t even laughed around each other since... I can’t remember when.”

“I haven’t given it much thought, but... What does that have to do with anything?”

Laughing, Susanne told him, is what happens when people are alive, and death, she said, is what happens when people stop.

But tonight, Susanne and Roland weren’t laughing. Only fucking. So they must’ve been dead.

Took a miracle to come back from the dead, and so many pray for one when all Roland had to do was search the online drugstores. Risk his credit history or someone else’s. Complete the questionnaire pertaining to his medical history, past drug use, allergies and illnesses.

Quantity and strength varied depending on the site, but a prescription bottle of blue pills cost around two hundred. A dirt cheap price to pay for raising the dead.

And now for the second time tonight, Susanne witnessed the miracle, her eyes so blue and bulging at how much larger than life he became.

Hard and unbendable, the same as stone, Roland slid inside and stayed, moving, breathing. He inhaled the fresh lavender of her chestnut curls—the scent that Roland used to smell on her clothes when he would do their laundry.

He met Susanne halfway, pushing up, falling back, coming forward. Locked in each other's arms, they were free from their past and their futures, breathing in together, breathing out. In. Out.

Truth inhaled: the thing that brought him this close to Susanne was very same thing that brought him to Sophia's final moment. Passion. The link between sex and death was passion, for passion meant raw emotion, obsession, and violence.

Hitting the wall is that ultimate feeling and rarity when a woman comes apart while under you, Susanne tightening her grip and doing everything she could to keep Roland inside. She dug her calves into the backs of his knees and sunk her teeth into his collarbone. He slid his hands along her thighs while bringing reality to fantasy, her reign no more and now a memory. He had that power. The kind that made him better at this than any star. Roland didn't waste time wishing for this to come true. He came true.

"Oh God," Susanne said, and then she shivered, pushing up faster. Their bodies turned into a rung out washcloth, the sheets soaked and their hair stuck together and moist. They didn't move; they didn't dare move. They just laid there breathing, Susanne bathing the backs of his legs with her calves. She slid her hands along his spine, coming up, back down. Up. Down.

Then she spread her legs for Roland to leave her.

"I'll be right back," he told her, closing the bedroom door behind him.

He should've released the pinch from the sting and the tingle between his legs, but there between his legs, stone still prevailed, and he needed to satisfy his addiction first.

On the balcony there wasn't a stale drag. Long swills of smoke were harsh against the throat, and welcome. His neck was thick. Nostrils were coarse. For a lot of people it's like this, where if you smoke, you can't smell. Your keen sense of what's foul and what's not becomes lost, and unless your nose is shoved down in it, you couldn't sniff the difference between fish and vaginal juice.

The trashcans below were uncovered and full, the bags stretched out and torn in certain places where maggots were going to feed before turning into flies.

It wasn't soaring above and away that Roland envied, but the fact that flies were so hard to kill, and fast. They didn't flee when you tried, either. They stuck around, dancing all about from one place to another so close by while you swatted away at them, almost as if they were rubbing it in your face, and laughing at you.

A burn swelled between his index and middle fingers; Roland ashed the butt that was down to the filter, the sting between his legs now spreading up to his stomach.

There was a throne to enjoy. And then hands to wash.

At the sink his reflection had brown eyes, the absolute beauties of a newborn. Intense eyebrows. Muscles for cheeks.

And a grin to die for.

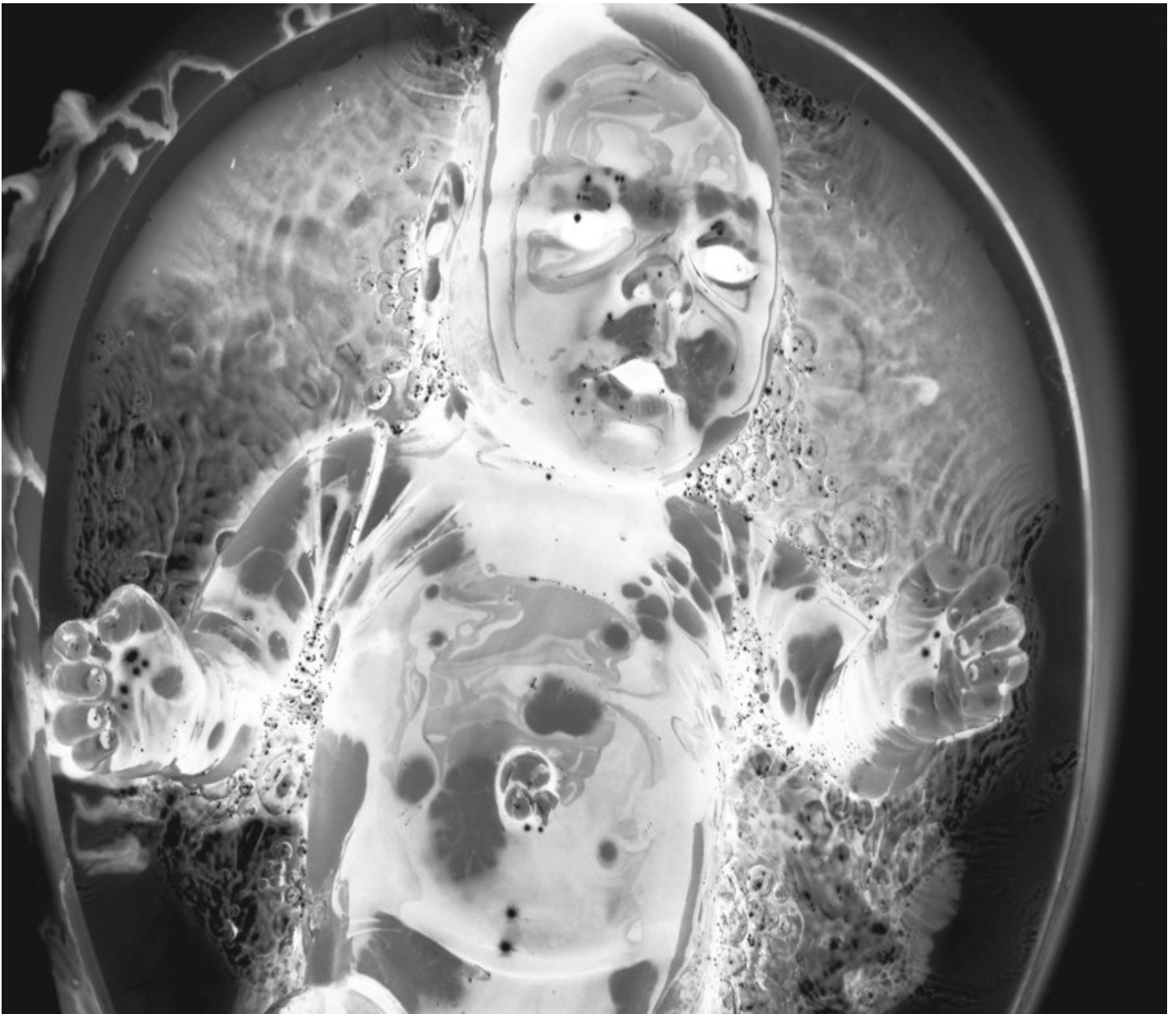
“Roland? Are you coming back to bed?”

Susanne’s voice, it led him to her bedroom, where Roland opened the door to find her sideways on her bed with her hand between her thighs, her eyes closed.

“Why haven’t you ever fucked me like that before?” she said, smiling. “You sure you’re not coming back after you leave tomorrow?”

But her smile remained; it did not fall into anything deeper or harder for her to control.

She wasn’t laughing, and neither was Roland.



PAGAN POETRY

Psychosis

By Nikita Driscoll

You're more myself than I
Fingers searing my flesh
Restraints cling to my skin
As endless mirages entice

Fingers searing my flesh
Like the subtle whisk of a scalpel
As endless mirages entice
Begging for the slipknot

Like the subtle whisk of a scalpel
Bouncing, twisting in menacing sport
Begging for the slipknot
He adorns his crimson necklace

Bouncing, twisting in menacing sport
Horrors chirp in melding solace
He adorns his crimson necklace
Obscenely hail this curtain call

Horrors chirp in melding solace
Now black pavement guides us
Obscenely hail this curtain call
Begging the engine cease

Now black pavement guides us
Light flashes, and a man in a suit yells
Begging the engine cease
Gravel splinters to crashing cliffs

Light flashes, and a man in a suit yells
Yield if you can
Gravel splinters to crashing cliffs

Silly limp-necked matron sanguinely smiles

Yield if you can
With a sharp snap
Silly limp-necked matron sanguinely smiles
I sag in despair

With a sharp snap
Restraints cling to my skin
I sag in despair
You're more myself than I

Reflections in a Pool

The search finally ended
Deaf ears murmur
as those empty eyes
hollowly lock my own
in a soft summer pool
each ripple bellowed – the
shuddering sound; a pin dropping,
a pencil scratching the floor
where were the shattering cries
this September night?
Foolish parents, following
the slaughtered sheep
They begged as they scrambled
to their knees; glancing at
the cold wooden deck
ice seeping through their veins
A dark colored pool reflected the face
- that, of a curious child

Savage Post

Brittany Warren

You stand guard, tangled in weeds of developing sufferer,
programmed in bitter haste—
spoiled.

Binary purpose,
violent hand rapture
starving bones chew you
versus the need,
it's alright.

Sweat engulfs with full lips,
and flies land, advantage as their poison
while you strip,
peel your clothes away.

Sopping lines,
perspiration ghosts
whisper to your abdomen,
and sink lower.

Moisture breathes you,
one in the same
as you finger concave skin highlight.

Lone post rests, rotting away,
pieces of wood chip in singular motion
as you bring body higher,
rest felt collection atop inanimate beast
and push into.

You ride,
splintering your insides
scream as layers of velvet skin tingle,
fall away from you
and bleeding hornets sting,
your treasure
sweet opiate.

Vessel
By Kyle Ratner

I am a broken vessel
Full of a thousand wounds
Empty still for every year that passes
And stabs its days into me
The months are like daggers in my heart
The weeks are like needles poking into my fingertips
The days are tiny syringes that slip into my skin as I sleep
The more I try to escape these empty days
They will me back up with their endless NOTHINGNESS.
Nietzsche would be happy, if he wasn't just dust
If words and actions are meaningless then burn all the books
Of the philosophers because their ideas are worthless
All that matters is beauty and beauty has become twisted
And deranged in my mind
Beauty is a seven legged mannequin crawling
With glistening wet eyes poking out of her skin
These cuts let the creatures slip out
And make patterns on the ceiling
The blood specks are monuments to a life that has failed
These tears are emblems of everything about you that I hate
I forgive you for betraying me
But I still want to see you suffer
When you take that last tumble
That last epic fail
I will be there to tower over you
And finally know peace.



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A Conversation with Ellen Datlow



First of all, let me say what an honor it is to interview a legend in the field. Your name may not pop to mind when people think of horror who are casual readers but they don't realize what a huge influence you have over the genre. You just won the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Horror Writer's Association and have edited dozens of anthology projects. How did this all come about? How did you get into this field?

Thank you. I started editing science fiction, fantasy, and a little horror at OMNI magazine and OMNI online, where I worked as Associate Fiction Editor and then Fiction Editor for seventeen years from 1980 to 1997. During that period, I started editing anthologies: first seven reprint anthologies (for Zebra) selecting stories from OMNI, then editing *Blood is Not Enough*,

my first half original/half reprint anthology on vampirism. The anthology themes I chose initially were those for which I thought the stories I'd buy wouldn't conflict with my job as OMNI fiction editor, but eventually, because for the last several years at OMNI I could only publish a very few stories per issue, that seemed less of a problem.

2. I think of all your original anthology concepts, "Snow White, Blood Red" and your "Best Horror of the year" series every year are my favorite. You seem to have a passion for fairy tales and urban legends. What fascinates you about them?

Terri Windling approached me with the fairy tale retelling concept—I've always loved fairy tales, from the time my mother read them to me as a child and then when I started reading them myself. They were magical. They were also recast for children when I was growing up. The idea of retelling fairy tales, taking them back from their sanitization by Disney started with Angela Carter and Tanith Lee. But Terri and my six volume series beginning with *Snow White, Blood Red* were great fun to edit and have probably have had a lasting influence on the field of contemporary fantasy. I'm not particularly interested in urban legends per se—although I did enjoy

co-editing *Haunted Legends* with Nick Mamatas—it was the idea of reinventing them as real stories that appealed to both of us. Urban legends are generally just vignettes and clichéd ones at that—I love ghost stories, the gothic, terror tales, *Contes cruels*.

2. Working with so many prestigious authors, everyone from Stephen King to Neil Gaiman, Charles De Lint to Joyce Carol Oates to the late Ray Bradbury. Have you actually had the chance to sit down with many of them and talk one on one or is it usually through agents and telephone conversations?

The only one of those I haven't talked to in person much are Stephen King and Ray Bradbury. The others you name I consider friends, or at least acquaintances. In fact, many of my authors have become friends over the years.

3. So when choosing stories for the Best Horror of the Year, I know some of the specifications are that it has to be horror published within a certain time frame and in a legitimate or qualifying publication but what really has to stand out for you for a story to get this title after reading through probably dozens and dozens of stories each year?

There's no such thing as a "qualifying publication"—the only criteria for me to look at a story is that it be published in the year for which I'm reading. The perfect combination of voice, storytelling, and character makes

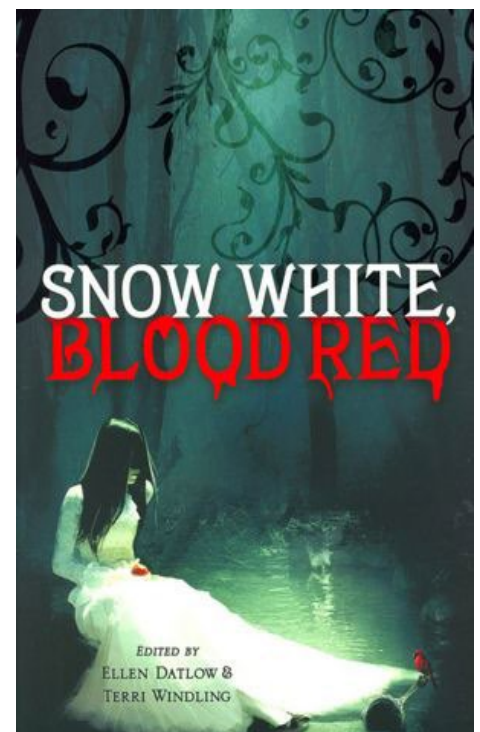
any type of story successful, but with horror I'm also looking for those stories that haunt me upon reading them, those that give me that extra feeling of unease and/or dread. As I read during the year I note the stories that really impress me then go back to them during my selection process as I whittle down the number to about 140,000 words a year. So while some stories I choose upon their first reading—I know I want them in the book—there are others that I end up reading two, three, or even four times.

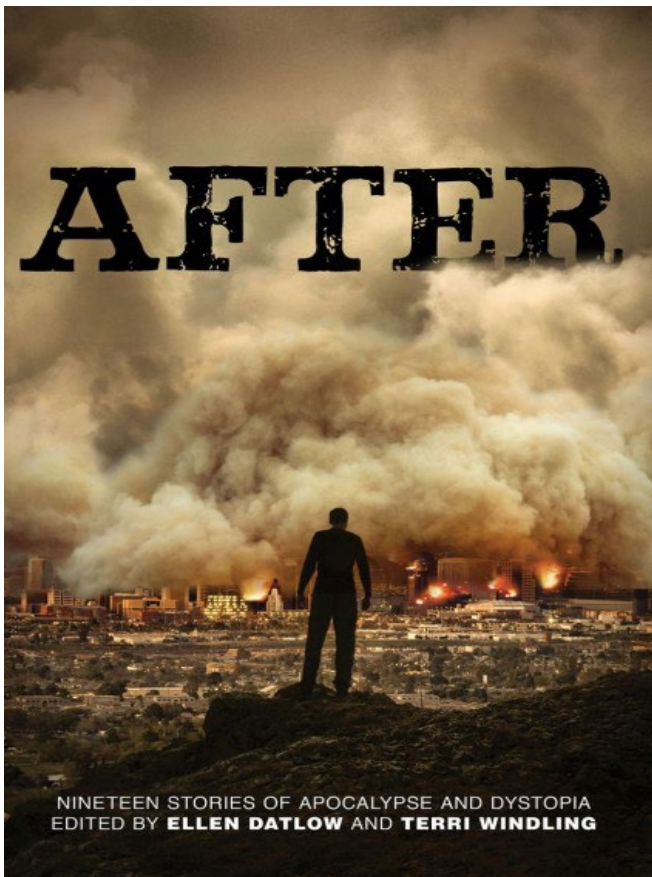
4. Having read horror, sf, and fantasy over the past few decades, what have you seen as a reader of a critical eye as the evolution of this type of fiction? Where do you think it is heading and are these genres sustainable in the long-term in a world that grows more jaded due to technological advancement and the media in general?

Science fiction, fantasy, and horror have all evolved differently—you can't really compare the three, even though they can all be places under the "fantastic fiction" umbrella. Science fiction has perhaps been a little more difficult to write because the world keeps catching up with it.

Fantasy has fragmented into niches, including surrealism, the weird tale (that isn't horror), urban fantasy, historical fantasy, imaginary world fantasy, and more. Horror has undergone a back and forth between quiet horror vs splatter horror plus body horror, psychological, monsters of different stripes, exceedingly dark suspense, etc. There are more diverse voices coming into the field of the fantastic including non-English language stories being translated into English for the first time. I have no idea where it's all heading but look forward to all future permutations of the literature of the fantastic.

6. For those of us who are fans, readers and writers of the genre of the fantastic, do you think there is hope for inexperienced and unknown writers to make it today or do you have to know someone in





the industry? Is social networking the key to success?

Of course there's hope for new writers. All you have to do is develop your voice and your skills in storytelling and send out your stories. Send one story out. Write another. Send that one out. There is no secret handshake, there are no trade secrets. Look up the markets and send your stories to [them](#). [Revise, rewrite, polish, and send them out.](#)

7. Your next anthology "After", Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia is coming out in October of this year. What can you tell us about it? Also, what do you think of the apocalypse culture in general and the phobia surrounding 2012?

The book is really more dystopic than apocalyptic and contains a wide range of *types* of stories on the theme, by some writers well-known in the young adult field and others better known for their adult fiction. Despite the theme, most of the stories are not depressing but are energetic, engaging, and occasionally even humorous. Terri and I are really happy about the way it came out. I don't think much of Apocalypse culture in general.

After: Dystopian and Post-apocalyptic Tales Edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling-A Review by Courtney Alsop

After starts with an introduction written by Datlow and Windling, discussing what is typically considered Dyslit. Instead of including stories that are only the utopias that have crumbled, they have compiled stories that are dark in tone. Furthermore, the stories are all about what happens *after* the fallout. Principally, these stories are about people trying to carve out some normality in the world they live in as they struggle to survive. I am so very glad that they kept it inclusive of such a broad spectrum of opportunity. Of the nineteen stories, there are different kinds of settings for the dystopia to be set: the ever popular vampire/zombie outbreaks, global warming, AI overpowering their makers, bugs that eat metal and electrical equipment, and epidemics, to name only a few. There is enough variety in subject matter, characters, and atmospheres to please everyone. Below I will very briefly discuss the pieces I believe to be strongest to give some indication as to what can be expected of this book.

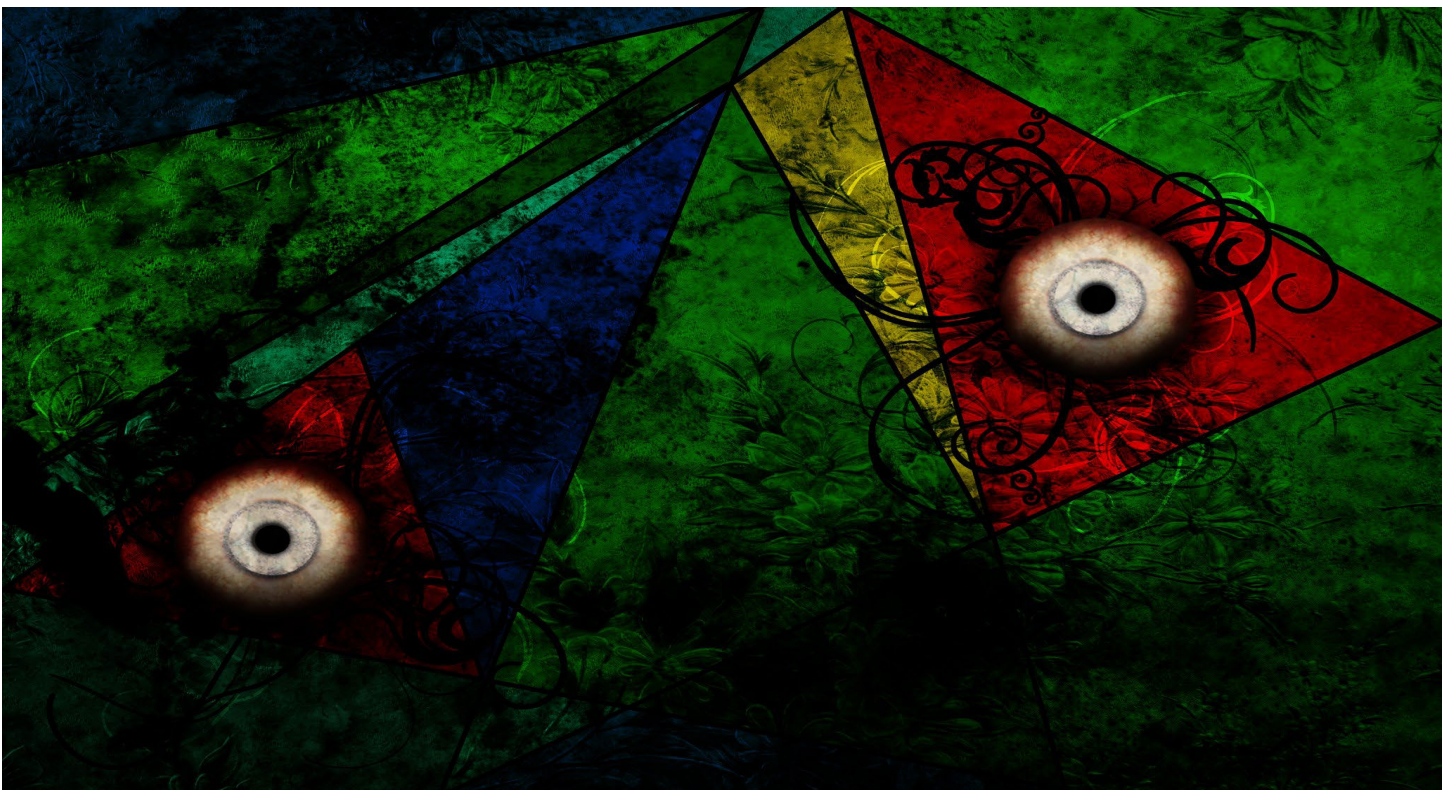
"After the Cure" by Carrie Ryan-The female protagonist is a Recovered, someone who was bitten and infected by vampire-zombie monsters, cured, and returned to a mostly human state. As a Recovered, she still watches the infected run in their packs and longs for that bond to return. She is without her family and human society has marked the Recovered as murderers, hindering her re-immersion into society. As she longs for the freedom of what she once was, James appears. Highly relatable to teens, the story addresses belonging, ostracism, and guilt.

“Valedictorian” by N. K. Jemisin-Zinhle strives to be Valedictorian of her graduating year. Yet there is something sinister lurking behind the title. What happens to the Valedictorian? Why are they despised by the other students, and why do her parents *not* want her to receive the honor? This story ends slightly too early for me, but it ends because that is all there is for all us non-Valedictorians to know.

“Faint Heart” By Sarah Rees Brennan-The City seeks to weed out the young men who are supposedly so violent they need wars to justify their existence. To eliminate disruption in the City, all unmarried men compete in the annual Trials, and only one man will make it out alive. The one who wins is crowned King and have a Queen Rosamond as his wife. Yvain and Tor are only two men who will be among many to attempt the trials to be crowned victor and win her hand in marriage. But what of *this* Queen Rosamond? She is unlike her predecessors, and she will surprise everyone in this year’s trials.

“Blood Drive” by Jeffrey Ford-Starting in senior year of high school, everyone carries a gun. Seriously. Teachers and students walk around with all sorts of loaded firearms. There are accidents and just plain stupid incidents. To me, what is the most interesting is that this dystopia is not too farfetched. No natural disasters or fallouts required. Child labour laws have been dismissed, church attendance on Sunday is mandatory, abortion is illegal, homosexuality is not accepted, etc. This story is the most plausible because there are people in the world who would happily see this world exist.

To me, the above are excellent examples of the pure gold that the book has to offer. However, the book does not start with its strongest story. This is a huge mistake in my opinion. How many potential readers will start with the first and be deterred? Especially with a YA audience you should start with a very solid piece, not what I found to be the weakest. As with all short story compilations, some are more engaging than others. Nonetheless, at the heart of each short story is a world that was like our own that fell apart. Each story ends before the main characters fix the world because there is no fixing, no healing. There is survival. Disasters *have already* hit the world and hurt even the people who did not set the disaster in motion. For the most part, with such shattering events, there is nothing that can be done to “fix” the problem to successfully revert back to life as it once was. A new normality must be carved out. For teens, I think, the world is always a scary place that ultimately is not to be fixed, at least in the moment, but *survived*.





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PUPPETEER

BY TRAVIS CHAPMAN

The shadows, they dance on the walls of the puppeteer
To form the shape of the marionette.
They beckon, they call, and they ask me to join
To be part of the shadows on the wall.

Unbeknownst to me, the puppets became the puppeteer.
Now I'm forced to be pulled by the strings that dig into my flesh
Until I can find another to take my place within the puppeteer's shadow
Or I'll be forced to stay in this realm forever.

DARKNESS

BY TRAVIS CHAPMAN

Inside the dark I can finally see
The space between the lines
To see the true intentions of the world
The beast in human skin

The visions flood through me
Foretelling my inevitable death
When the darkness finally drags me in
To make me cast aside my consciousness

I am that beast in human skin
That's why the dark loves me so
Embraces and empowers me
So I can see the true order of the world.



THE CREATION

A POEM INSPIRED BY MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

BY: JOSHUA RYAN

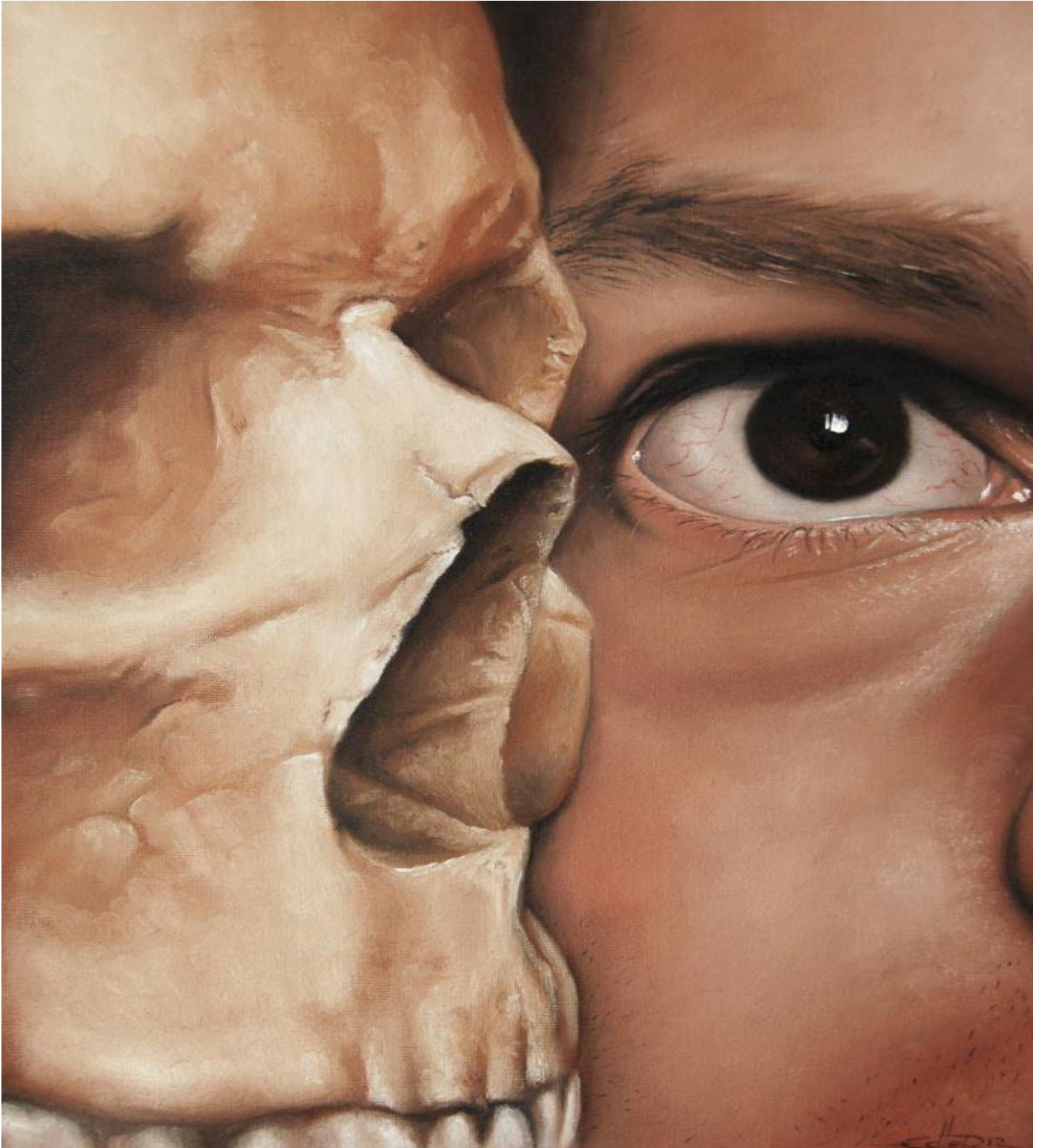
I move through the cold night off to the quiet graves
The silent dead await the lightning rips and raves.
The rain pours down upon; the solid earth softens
And I begin to dig vying for those coffins.
An hour passes by; I am covered in dirt
I hit the precious wood; my anxious muscles hurt.
In maddening delight I have achieved purpose
The thunder rolls above; I collect my corpses.

Year without a summer; the darkness fills the air
Charnel houses supplied; the bones, the skin, the hair.
With the collected parts feverishly content
Churchyards in the distance; now to my apartment.
I begin surgery; Building my creation
Pieces of the puzzle; O' re-animation!
The tempest worsening; and time slowly passes
I am playing God descending into madness.

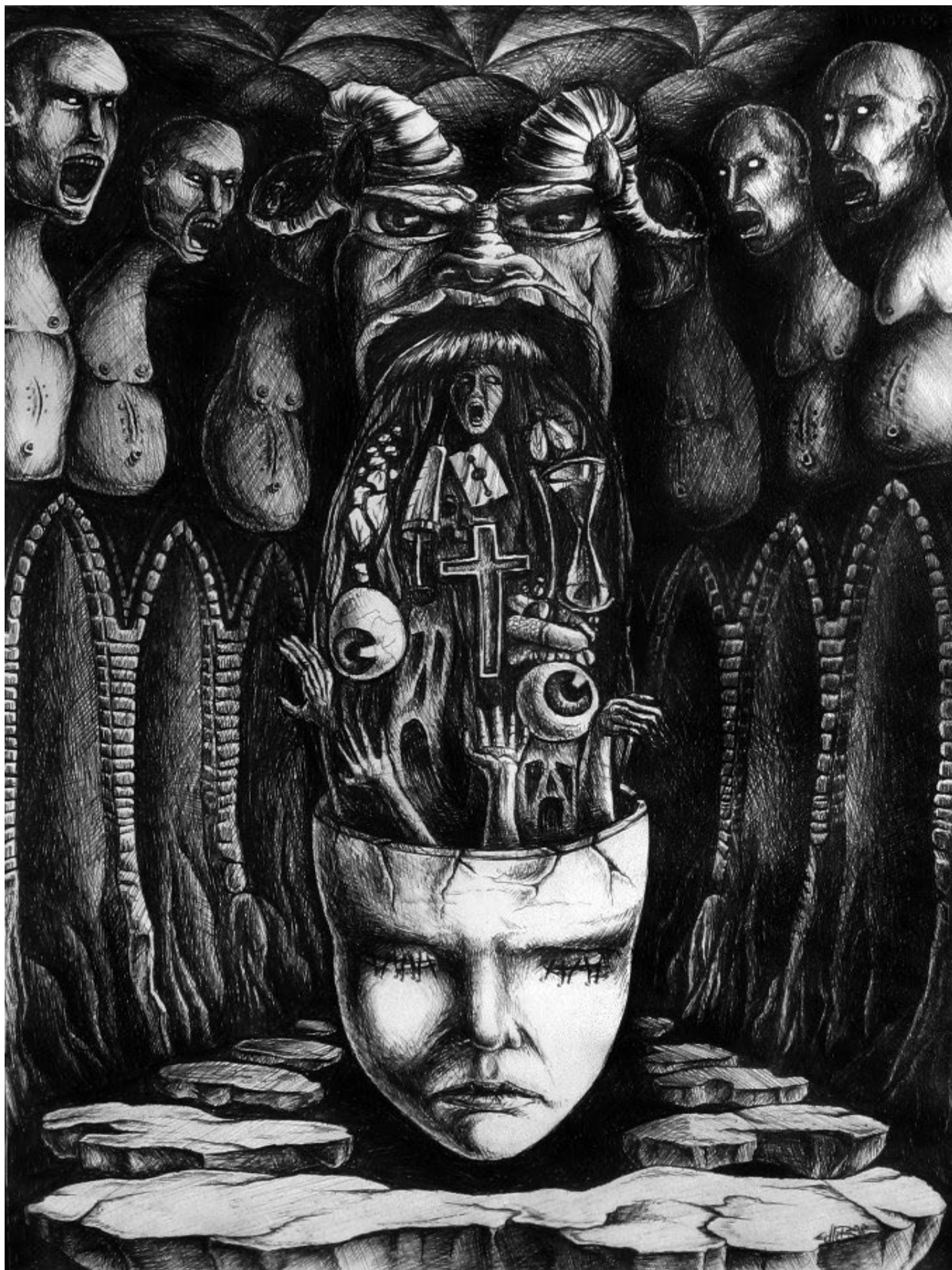
The pieces are in place; and I begin to stitch
I stitch my hands tired; anxious for a poor twitch.
I have reaped what I've sewn; I have conquered pure death
The body is complete a mess of bone and flesh.
Long stitch around the throat; in attaching the head
With outer shell complete it's time to raise the dead.
O' my execution; the decline of my psyche
O' electrocution pray, as the lighting strikes.
It's Alive, it's Alive; I've brought life to this world.
It's Alive, it's Alive; I've brought life to this world.

reality must die

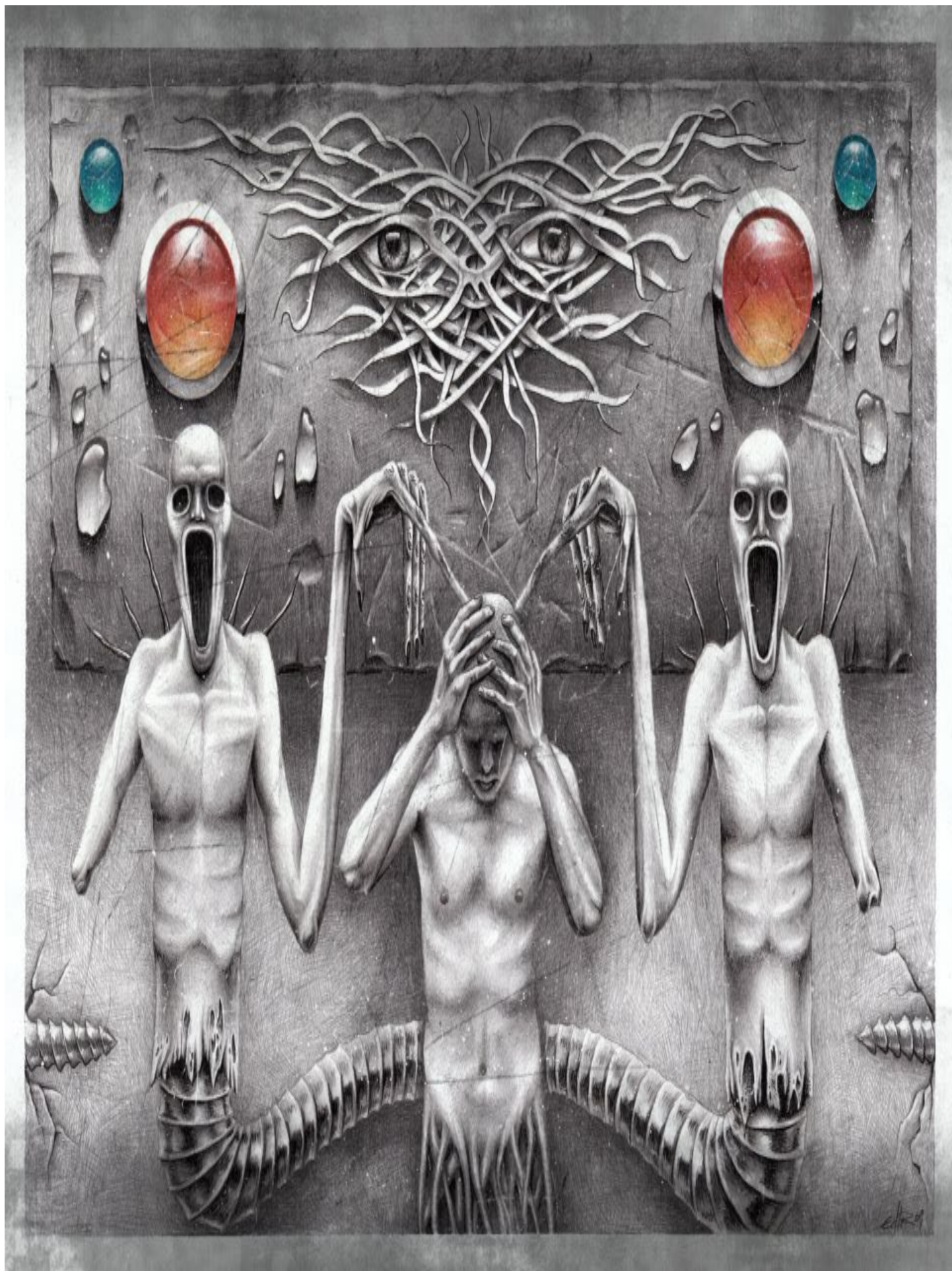
Christian Edler













BALDING

DANIELLE BROWN

In the centre of the room sits a massive pink bucket, flexible plastic with big pink handles on the sides. It emits steam into the frosty air. A concrete floor, painted shiny, yet dull where the paint has worn thin, sits below the steaming pink bucket in the centre of the room. The room itself is large. Very large, at least the size of a football pitch. And there's a chill in the air. Sterile and disinfectant, the fluorescent overhead lights don't allow shadows.

A man enters from the far corner. The only noise to be heard, his naked footsteps as he walks across the room, slowly. He's wrapped in a white fluffy dressing gown. He doesn't appear to be wearing anything else. Short, incredibly short and round and completely bald, otherwise one might be reminded of a dwarf from a fantasy story. His head matches perfectly the sheen on the floor (where the paint hasn't worn thin); the same person could have polished them (and probably did).

In the chill, his breath clouds in front of him as he walks towards the pink bucket in the centre of the room. He removes the white fluffy dressing gown, discarding it on the floor. He's entirely naked. His round belly looks like it harbours a pregnancy as it wobbles up and down sometimes showing his short fat cock and bulging scrotum.

His skin is streaky; red in places, brown in others; it appears he had an accident involving a bottle of fake tanner and another with sun block. Even his shiny round head did not escape the fake tanner; there is a place where the light is not reflected back at the ceiling.

He steps into the steamy bucket. He looks as if he might sit in it. There might be enough space. Timidly he puts in a toe. And rapidly pulls it out. Whatever is in the bucket is clearly rather hot. He makes another attempt to step into the bucket. It's unsuccessful. He looks around, uncertainty spreading across his streaky red face. He inhales deeply and then holds his breath. He jumps in. He looks like he wants to jump out again but doesn't.

Naked, short and fat with no hair, he sits alone in the steamy pink bucket. No one else will fit in with him, so alone is his only option. The sides are bulging but it shouldn't break due to the flexibility of the plastic.

Footsteps can be heard once again, this time coming from the far corner opposite where the man appeared. Someone is walking into the room wearing high-heels. They echo off the concrete walls and floor, but there's some muffling due to the lack of a ceiling where only pipes and wires can be seen between the fluorescent light fittings. Someone ought to fit ceiling tiles.

The expression on the short bald troll's face brightens. He's been expecting the footsteps and is clearly rather pleased to hear them. He can't see the person the footsteps belong to – he is facing the wrong direction.

The owner of the footsteps is tall with very long legs and equally long arms with fingers to match. Her black hair tumbles over her shoulders in loose curls. It is amazing she can stay upright in her boots, knee high with impossibly thin and high heels. She lacks tights or stockings. Hints of cellulite create lowlights on her pale legs as she stalks.

The man in the pink bucket quivers and shakes but he looks happy with a big embarrassing grin on his streaky face. It is impossible to imagine someone looking that stupid and goofy in front of a woman of such beauty voluntarily but the bald streaky man can't help it – his only indulgence brings him joy beyond words. He's facing away from her in his pink bucket so he has yet to admire her beauty and he does not seem to be the self-conscious type, so maybe his appearance does not matter to him and it doesn't to her because she gets paid for what she is about to do.

High heels slap slowly on the concrete floor getting closer to the bucket. The streaky round man turns red clashing terribly with his steamy bucket. He has not turned around to see the woman the footsteps belong to; he hasn't even turned his head. He closes his eyes, perhaps he doesn't want to admire her beauty. He keeps his eyes firmly shut as she continues her slow approach.

Bent slightly at the waist, she rubs his head. It is already incredibly shiny. She keeps rubbing. He keeps his eyes shut. He visibly shakes with excitement. The woman, bored looking and pretty, continues rubbing. Not once does the bald man open his eyes.

Surely he must be getting a friction burn by now – it has been an hour. The thin woman must have hidden muscles because she continues rubbing in the same fashion in which she started. She does not even appear to be tiring.

No more steam escapes the bucket as she continues to rub. The man never stops quivering, in fact, he appears even more excited. He lacks any conscious movement. One would think that having his head vigorously rubbed for an hour would be painful but apparently not. Unless he gets his kicks from the thought of having the woman rub down to his skull and then rub that away too, exposing his brain.

The expression on his face changes slightly. He turns redder, disguising the streaks because even they are red now. The squint on his firmly shut eyes softens and the lines smooth out (he still doesn't open them). A low moan echoes off the walls and floors. The woman keeps rubbing.

The moaning becomes louder still until he screams. And suddenly, he stops. Once the echo dies away there is nothing but silence.

The round man relaxes against the sides of his bucket. They bulge beneath his weight. He opens his beady eyes and sees the woman for the first time. She reaches into one of her thigh high boots and takes out a spoon. Without a word she hands it to him.

High heels echo off the walls and floor as she exits the same way she entered. Hints of cellulite dancing beneath the harsh white lights. Hair bounces slightly without any product in it and perfect shine.

With his table spoon, the man starts to eat the contents of his bucket. Spoon after spoon for the first fifteen minutes without slowing. White and textured, it might be plain rice pudding. His over-sized stomach is probably becoming full but he continues eating. After another fifteen minutes he slows again. There's no way to know how much rice pudding in his the pink bucket with the man.

For the next half hour, his spoonfuls are slow and look painful, with long pauses between each. Eventually he stops eating all together and just sits in the bucket. Goosepimples start to break out on his streaky flesh.

When he starts shivering, he stands up and steps out of the bucket. From the waist down he is coated in the textured white substance (probably rice pudding). He picks up his fluffy white dressing gown from the floor and exits the way he entered the room.



AUGUST 15TH
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AND BROM



NEXT ISSUE: MUTATIONS & MUTILATIONS